



Húdé, ak'á dän K'i hats'ech'in'gyó Zhi

OUR WAY

SALMON FROM  
LONG TIME AGO  
AND TODAY



Selkirk First Nation



# SELKIRK FIRST NATION:

We are Selkirk First Nation (SFN), Northern Tutchone people, who have a long history with salmon. We are located on the banks of the Pelly River at Pelly Crossing, Yukon, and have lived at Fort Selkirk and Minto Landing, located along the Yukon River.

Salmon that travel through our traditional territory are a part of our way of life, a part of our history and culture that we have used and respected for thousands of years. Family fish-camps located along the Yukon and Pelly River are alive and thriving. We continue to harvest Chinook and fall chum to maintain our traditional way of life.

Going to family fish-camps along the Pelly River is part of being an SFN citizen. In a changing world, our family fish-camps are a place where our people gather, celebrate culture, share, pass on knowledge, practice Doòli, and harvest fish and other animals that provide us with nutrition and sustenance.

We are a self-governing First Nation that manages the lands and resources within our traditional territory. SFN is exercising our rights and has made using and respecting salmon a priority. Being true to our culture and traditions, we draw from the wisdom of our Elders and our traditional ways in order to use and respect salmon today.



## Gyó yéndé PURPOSE OF THIS SALMON PLAN:

*“Our Way” - Salmon from Long Time Ago and Today* is a plan for the people and community and driven by our First Nation government and citizens. What we do with salmon is rooted in our traditional laws of the Selkirk people and the four major principles: Caring, Sharing, Respect and Teaching. We have many salmon in our traditional territory that play an important role. It is time to tell our story.

*“We can’t give up. We have to keep going no matter what.”*

Source: Elder, Emma Alfred  
Adapting to Climate Change  
and Keeping our Traditions



## Gyó Zhi Dän K'i hats'ech'in'

## "OUR WAY" WITH SALMON



### Gyó Sóóthän uk'ets'inté sóóthän nets'intr'áq

### WE USE AND RESPECT SALMON

The term salmon management is used as all-encompassing term today in fisheries. Selkirk people have always had a personal and care-taking role with salmon and refer to the word and concept of management as using and respecting salmon. This plan will use the term of using and respecting salmon in preference over the term management.

Other old traditional fish-camps are Three Way Channel and Victoria Rock.

At Three Way Channel, Selkirk made and used fish traps  
At Victoria Rock, Selkirk used fishing spears and nets.

Dóoli k'í hats'ech'in  
WE USE TRADITIONAL LAWS

Our way with salmon reflects traditional law, which is Dän Ki or the "First Nation way". To understand Dän Ki, one must understand Doòli, which is guided by four major principles: **Caring, Sharing, Respect and Teaching.**

Ts'ek'inetú Tegé ts'in Gyó Yets'atsi  
WE HARVEST MAINLY THE PELLY RIVER SALMON STOCKS

We focus our harvest on the Pelly River rather than the other mixed salmon stocks on the main section of the Yukon River so we don't impact other First Nation fish-camps. In addition to the Pelly River, we also traditionally harvest at Fort Selkirk and a few other fish-camps on the Yukon River (such as Three Way Channel).

Eyałák zhi ts'ohu'in'  
WE WORK WITH OUR PARTNERS

SFN works with other Northern Tutchone Nations, Yukon First Nations, Yukon Salmon Sub-Committee (YSSC) and Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO) to share our approaches and knowledge. SFN recognizes that we need to work together for the benefit of the salmon.

Zhi yenithän neniłe háłäw hetl'e' yakaak kineddhät dé  
WE TAKE ONLY WHAT WE NEED AND THINK OF FUTURE GENERATIONS

We monitor and plan, and harvest based on the number of salmon and the health of the fish. We adapt our harvest if there are many salmon or if there are few salmon coming back.

Gyó deetlé ech'i łätäw haju gyó  
WE ARE ADAPTIVE AND FLEXIBLE  
(IT DEPENDS ON HOW MANY SALMON THERE ARE)

We adjust our salmon plan based on how many salmon there are and how the salmon are doing. We change our planning if there are many salmon or if there are few salmon coming back.

łyók k'un' ełun K'é tánäts'iké  
WE RELEASE FEMALES

We help females get to the spawning grounds by harvesting smaller male salmon and releasing live females from our nets.

Lek'é Duyana hats'edän dach'in łyók kún' zhú  
WE ENSURE FISH-CAMP CULTURE STAYS ALIVE

Our way is to keep fish-camp culture alive through a small "taste" of Chinook or enough fish to pass on knowledge, traditions and ceremony.

łak'ants'inté  
WE SHARE

Sharing is our way. Fish are given to those who cannot fish for themselves. Our way is for citizens to talk to each other and share access to fish, fishing holes and fish-camps.

łyók zé zhú hák'äw temyän tits'echi  
WE FISH EARLY

Fishing early means that we can set up our fish-camps, dry the fish well, and harvest the early smaller males.

Dän né azhún yets'atsi  
WE HARVEST OTHER TRADITIONAL FOODS

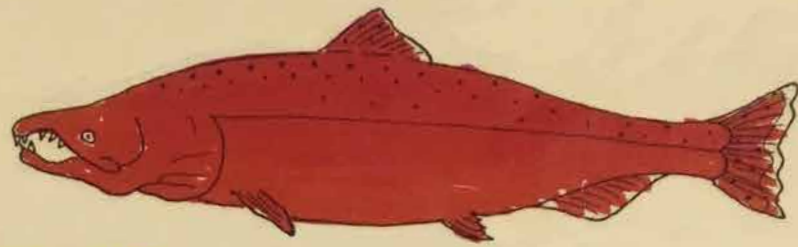
Traditional food is important. We use many different kinds of food. We harvest small game, moose, freshwater fish (such as whitefish, lake trout, grayling, burbot and northern pike), fall chum, and other animals while the Chinook stocks rebuild. At our May Gathering, we share information about salmon harvest.

Dän K'i Dúyána hats'edän  
WE SHARE OUR KNOWLEDGE WITH YOUTH

We teach our youth how to use and respect salmon. We help our youth learn about salmon by encouraging them to participate in salmon meetings, at the sonar, in the schools, and at family camps.

Déjän Huch'áq Húdän yé ech'i  
WE BELIEVE THIS IS FOR SELKIRK PEOPLE

We are taking responsibility for using and respecting the salmon in our traditional territory. We don't own the fish and we don't want to dictate to others what to do with their salmon. SFN citizens at family camps take their own responsibility around using salmon.



# GYÓ DOÒLI \* ŁYOK KU

- Don't talk about bears
- No bear blood running into river
- Don't pack fresh fish at the same time when you're packing water
- Kids should not touch fish eyes
- Get rid of fish nets if otter gets caught in them
- Don't put fish in empty pot and pour water over them
- Young girls and women should not step over fish or fish nets
- Keep fish camp clean
- Cut salmon by the shore - don't pack up to camp
- When fish is right in front of you don't talk about it
- Cook first fish and share with everybody
- Take eyes out first and throw back in river so kids won't think about touching them
- If kids touches fish eye, cut off front fin and rub kid's eye with it
- If you kill bear at fish camp, you won't catch any kind of fish anymore at that camp for the rest of the season

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## Gyó THE SALMON

The two kinds of salmon in our traditional territory are Chinook and fall chum. Salmon spawn in freshwater and spend at least a part of their lives in the ocean.

Chinook salmon from the Yukon River spend about four years at sea (ranging from 1 to 6 years). Most Chinook spend another 1-2 years growing up in freshwater before moving out to the ocean. Yukon River Chinook can be approximately 7 years old when returning to their spawning grounds on the Pelly River.

Fall chum salmon spend about three years at sea (ranging 2 to 5 years). Yukon River fall chum fry go to the ocean right away and spend very little time in freshwater.

Pelly River salmon leave the streams and creeks in our area and move to the ocean. When they are adults and are ready, they come back to their home streams and creeks, traveling over a thousand kilometers along the Yukon River to the Pelly River. The longest distance traveled by Yukon River salmon is over 2,960 kilometers to their spawning grounds making it one of the longest salmon migrations in the world.



CHINOOK



CHUM



Salmon Illustrations YSSC

## Dóoli k'í hats'ech'in

### WE FOLLOW TRADITIONAL LAWS

We follow SFN traditional laws. These are rules to keep our community, land and animals healthy and safe. Our traditional law is part of Dän Ki or the "First Nation Way". This has been our system of survival for thousands of years. To understand Dän Ki we need to understand Doòli.

Doòli is our ancient way of living in harmony with the natural and spiritual world. Doòli is all encompassing.

Doòli is a way we show respect for plants and animals, and towards each other. We follow Doòli at fish-camp in order to show respect for salmon and to teach others. It is also an enduring process of learning how to live in balance and harmony with everything in the physical world and the spiritual world beyond.

All of our Northern Tutchone Dän Ki, including Doòli and Traditional Law, are guided by four major principles: **Caring, Sharing, Respect and Teaching.**

Selkirk people continue to live by these laws and continue to learn from the traditional ways. For the past two decades, SFN has been working hard to restore and revive our traditional laws.

*"The age old traditions around harvesting salmon at fish-camps has continued because of the use of customary and spiritual laws (Doòli) which has guided Northern Tutchone people for thousands of years."*

Source: Keeping our Traditions at the Fish-camps

# FOR SALMON WE ARE GUIDED BY FOUR MAJOR PRINCIPLES:

## Łak'ants'inté (CARING):

- We make a contribution to the overall Chinook salmon stocks through stock restoration initiatives within our traditional territory (such as managing beaver dams).
- We focus on the Pelly River stocks to ensure our harvest does not affect other fishers in upstream communities.
- We conserve Chinook and change the way we fish according to, and depending how, the salmon are doing.
- We harvest other fish and animals to take the pressure off of Pelly River Chinook salmon (such as lake trout, grayling, whitefish, moose, and fall chum salmon) when conservation concerns around Chinook arise.
- We make sure the water quality and habitat is good for the fish for their entire life-cycle (as eggs to fry to adults).

## Tayéts'eli (SHARING):

- We share our salmon information with other salmon agencies to help the salmon. For example, SFN keeps track of how many fish are caught at fish-camps along the Pelly River.
- We share salmon with other citizens in need and with other Northern Tutchone communities.
- We share our traditional ways and best practices with other Yukon First Nations.
- We share "our way" with salmon with our partners.



For all things, including salmon, we are guided by the principles of Caring, Sharing, Respect and Teaching

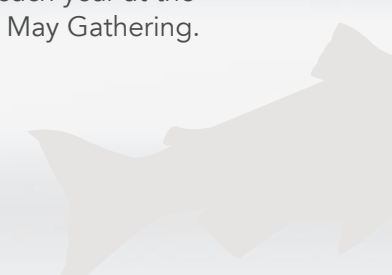
## Nats'at'ra (RESPECT):

- We practice our all-encompassing Doòli at fish-camps and respect the fish and animals.
- We respect the Self-Government and Final Agreements and exercise our use and respect for the Pelly River salmon.
- We use traditional knowledge.
- We catch Chinook on the Pelly River to reduce fishing on the main Yukon River that other upriver communities rely upon.
- We release the females or "egg fish". Traditionally they are harder to dry and if there were too many females, we would pull our nets.

## Huts'edän (TEACHING):

- We continue to pass on knowledge at family fish-camps.
- We teach youth all aspects of salmon fishing, life at fish-camp, the traditional laws and traditional knowledge.
- We visit the classroom where we raise salmon fry and share knowledge about the salmon life cycle.
- We share our information each year at the annual Northern Tutchone May Gathering.

Our Elders have stated that in the past, the traditional law was simple and clear. Citizens would fish when they needed food and stop fishing when they had enough. The concept of "numbers of fish" is foreign to our people, who either had enough and removed their nets or not enough fish and set their nets. In these ways, over thousands years, the Selkirk people have always practiced their traditional ways.



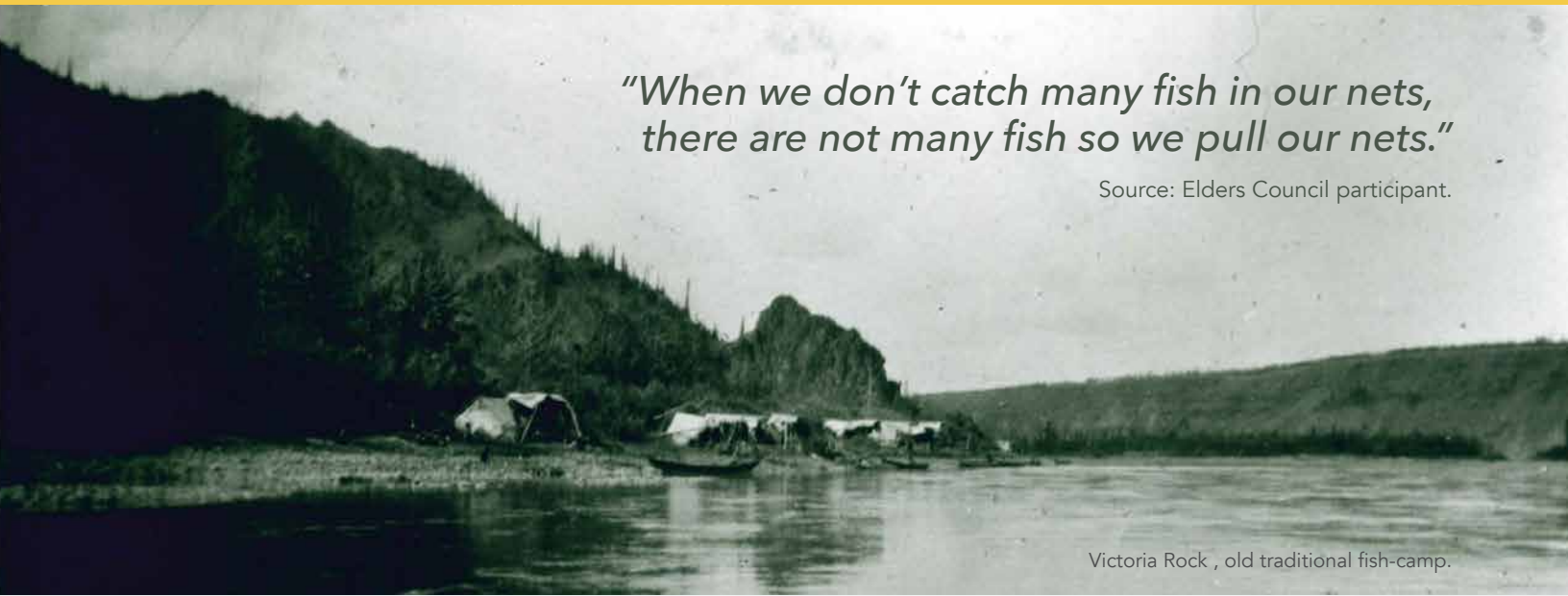
*"Last year I pulled my net out and stopped fishing, they were still coming and I let others use my spot. I have shared this place many times."*

Source: Elder, Franklin Roberts



*"Respect is the number one traditional law."*

Source: Elder, Danny Joe Keeping our Traditions at Fish-camp.



*"When we don't catch many fish in our nets, there are not many fish so we pull our nets."*

Source: Elders Council participant.

Victoria Rock , old traditional fish-camp.

## Húch'ąą Hudän Łyók ye Dach'in' SELKIRK FIRST NATION FISHING CULTURE:

*"Fish was so important you wait the whole winter for it."*

Source: Elder, David Johnny

While SFN people are conserving we still have an active and thriving fish-camp culture. Being at fish-camp and maintaining our traditions are very important to us.

With the Chinook salmon not coming back like they used to, SFN has developed a flexible approach to using and respecting salmon that provides more certainty for citizens.

Our people have always used family fish-camps along the Pelly and Yukon rivers. Our fish-camps are organized around families and passed on from generation to generation. We pass our fishing spots, traditional fishing holes, family recipes and culture, customs, traditions and knowledge to the next generation.

There are some citizens that don't have a family fish-camp or access to the salmon. It is our way to share our fishing holes and salmon with others in need. For example, in 2015 and 2016, the breakup of ice along the Pelly River took away some of our traditional fishing holes. Our people had to adapt and re-create these traditional fishing holes by piling up rocks to make eddies for a net.

### TRADITIONALLY, FIRST NATIONS HAVE ALWAYS KNOWN THAT OVER HARVESTING WAS TO "GO HUNGRY".

- Animals taught us many of the traditional skills our people needed to survive. Remember to respect all animals and only think in a positive way about them.
- It is our responsibility as Northern Tutchone people to teach others the skills we have learned.
- When you teach others how to live a traditional way of life, they can do it for life.
- Pay attention when someone teaches you, it could help you and our future generations.
- Help others when you see they are having trouble.
- Teach others the survival skills you know.
- Make time to learn survival skills from your Elders, they may save your life. Our people have used these skills for thousands of years.
- Dän (people) have been using plants from our land to build our shelters and homes, to keep warm, to give us food and medicine for thousands of years. As long as we are careful and show respect when we use plants, they will keep coming back to help us again.

Source: *Doòli Dän ki – hudę hudän k'i hats'adän* – lessons, teachings and laws from our Northern Tutchone traditional ways

*"Fish-camp is a peaceful place to be. I have a high mountain at my camp, it is a high place. We don't go hungry at fish-camp."*

Source: Elder, Franklin Roberts

*"Look for a known back-eddy, we would restructure our known eddy by hauling in rocks, it needs to be deep like 15 feet for our net. The old people tell us this before they pass and we do the same thing."*

Source: Elder, Franklin Roberts





*“Every salmon season being at fish-camp was like coming alive of ourselves and our traditions – like a flower blooming in the summer, in full bloom.”*

Source: Roger Alfred - Keeping our Traditions at the Fish-camps

*“Fishing gives you identity and says who you are. I am proud that I grew up at fish-camp.”*

Source: Elders Council participant

There used to be fewer fish-camps and they were larger with many generations at one fish-camp. This has changed as our people want to start their own camps with their families. We now have 24 active fish-camps in our territory with a few more starting up at traditional sites.

Our fish-camps are set up before the fish arrive which is around the second week of July. Fish-camp locations were always selected so they were central to salmon, moose, small game, and a good place to camp.

Fish-camps are a very important place for us as Northern Tutchone people. Our citizens talk about family fish-camp as a place that brings balance and holds memories and identity for us. Fish-camp is our place to pass on knowledge and practice our traditional law.

Fishing raises the morale of our community and is a part of our identity. Family memories are captured and a simple and meaningful way of life is reinforced.

Being at fish-camps also supports our mental and physical health, emotional and spiritual wellbeing. Fish-camp supports our healthy and physical lifestyle where we eat traditional foods, and exercise by mending and setting nets, setting up fish-camps, and running of fish-camp. This is especially true for our Elders so they stay physically and mentally healthy, and active. Fish oil is a very important part of SFN citizens’ diet.



*“How can we lose this, this is what makes us who we are, I don’t know what it would be like without fish-camp.”*

Source: Kevin McGinty

*“Teach them at fish-camp and grow up with it so they can learn.”*

Source: Elder, Franklin Roberts

*“Fish-camps are just like a teaching place because you listen to stories at night...it’s like a gathering - where people used to visit long time ago.*

*Now people come to fish-camp. They sit around and talk. They talk about long time ago - how things are changing, how people are changing, how youth are changing.*

*You don’t have to stress here. Here you work. You have to cut your wood, make your fires. You have to go out and need things for camp.*

*You’re always busy here, you’re always doing something and that is good for your mental health and your physical and spiritual health.”*

Source: Elder, Lucy McGinty  
Keeping our Traditions at the fish-camps



## INDICATORS, CHANGES AND ADAPTATION

Selkirk people are facing dramatic changes to our land and animals. As First Nation people we are connected with the land and animals. Changes are taking place because of climate change, development (like mining and tourism) and general human impacts. Changes are also taking place with the SFN Government's implementation of its Final Agreement.

Some changes to the land, animals and fish that we have noticed includes:

- The fish have been getting bigger over the last two years. Some feel this is because of what they were doing in Alaska, where they were actively managing Chinook salmon in-season.
- The fish are often getting soft and not as red as they used to be.
- The river is getting warmer.
- Where we used to fish there are now some landslides and we must look for another fishing spot.
- When the river "goes out" in the spring, the ice goes earlier, is changing and taking our fishing holes out.
- People are starting to harvest deer as well.
- There is a great deal of water fluctuation, some years there is low water and fish can't get back to the spawning grounds and other years there is high water which makes it difficult to fish.

Our Elders also talk about "hard times coming". At community meetings like May Gathering, we hear that these hard times will impact fish and wildlife, that there will not be enough food, the cost of living will be extremely high, and there will be fewer jobs.

*"Long ago the fish were bigger and oilier, and would take 10-12 days to dry real good. The salmon used to be cut in one piece rather than two like we do now."*

Source: Keeping our Traditions at the Fish-camps

There are many signs that our people traditionally followed to know when the salmon would arrive in the river.

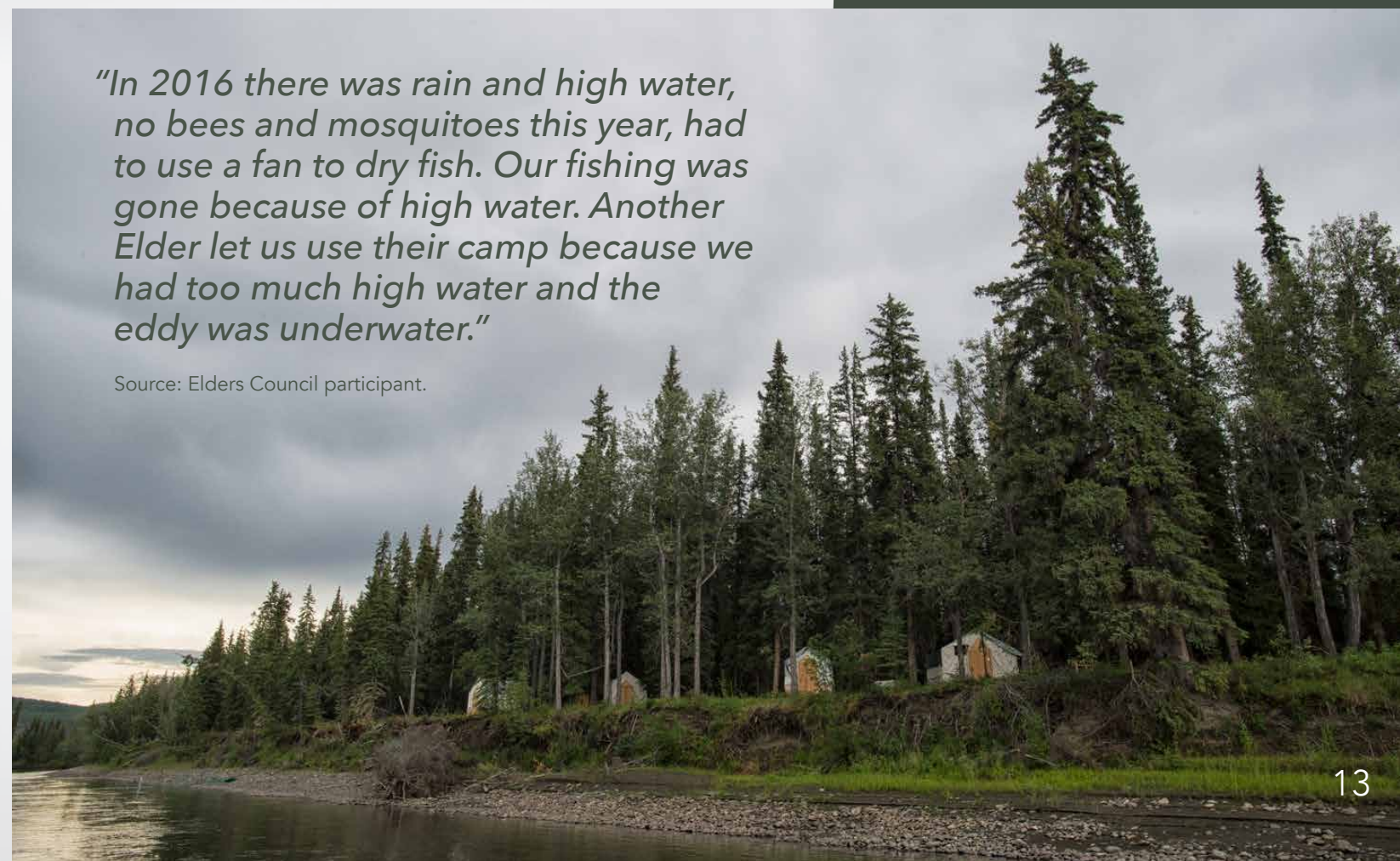
- **Weather** – first you get the north wind, the first north wind in July and then you get a big rainstorm in July that tells you that salmon is on the way.
- **Tree sap** – in July, when you cut the bark off poplar tree and if you see poplar tree water, that means the salmon are here and ready to harvest.
- **Bears** – you see lots of bears, then the salmon are here.
- **Kingfisher** – right after the wind and rain, the kingfisher come out and if you see the kingfisher, the kingfisher say the salmon are here. That is why they talk when they talk, they are telling the salmon are here, they are ready.
- **Soapberries** – when they turn from green to red, the salmon are here. If you see lots of soapberries on just about every bush, there is going to be lots of salmon. Northern Tutchone Elders at May Gathering (keeping our traditions at the fish-camps: our ancestors' gift to our youth).

*"Things are changing in our environment, the fish came early, they were all the same size, there were no 'egg fish'."*

Source: Elder, Franklin Roberts

*"In 2016 there was rain and high water, no bees and mosquitoes this year, had to use a fan to dry fish. Our fishing was gone because of high water. Another Elder let us use their camp because we had too much high water and the eddy was underwater."*

Source: Elders Council participant.





*"When I was 5-12 years old we would have five camps and they would take at least 300 and at most 700 fish. We needed these fish and there was no store. Five-hundred barely got us through the winter and 300 often was not enough."*

Source: Elders Council Participant



## Hudé Dän K'I Temyän tâtsch'í gyó yé HOW WE USE SALMON

By using salmon and developing a salmon plan, Selkirk First Nation's citizens are taking steps to preserve their traditions and way of life.

### OUR TRADITIONAL WAY

Over the last twenty years, in response to declining numbers of Chinook salmon, all Yukon First Nations have reduced harvest in order to conserve Yukon River Chinook and ensure that more fish get to the spawning grounds.

Our Elders have said that, traditional laws were simple and clear. We would fish when we needed food and stop fishing when we had enough. Counting the "number of fish" was a new concept to First Nation people, who either had enough or not enough fish.

Traditionally, we set our nets and if there were not that many in the nets, we would take our nets out. This is how our Selkirk people have practiced our way.



*"When we don't catch many fish in our nets, there are not many fish so we pulled our nets."*

Source: Elders council participant.

*"Many First Nations people practice Traditional Law/Knowledge and reduce their fishing effort in order to conserve salmon stocks. Traditionally, First Nations have always known that to over harvest was to 'go hungry'."*

Source: Yukon River Drainage Basin Harvest Data Study (p. 4)

*"We need to see how many fish are coming back, if there is not enough then we need to save them for the future. We need to keep track of it on the calendars."*

Source: Elder, David Johnny





## Ak'á dyána hats'edän HOW WE FISH NOW

Selkirk First Nation has a voluntary, conservation oriented, flexible management approach:

- At the beginning of the salmon run, each family fish-camp is asked to limit their catch to 15 Pelly River Chinook salmon. Once we know how many fish are coming to Canada and if the numbers are high enough, we inform our citizens that they can catch another 15 Pelly River Chinook salmon. It is recognized that some fish-camps have more families than others.
- Live release all females so they can continue their journey.
- One net of 50 foot with 5-6 inch mesh.
- SFN Fish and Wildlife Monitors visit fish-camps and keep track of the salmon run to see how it is doing.

We ask our citizens to do this voluntarily and know that some family fish-camps will take more salmon and others will take less. Over the last two years we know this approach has been working because the number of Chinook salmon caught and reported by citizens was very close to the recommended number of Chinook per family fish-camp.

We believe that there should be some fishing by Selkirk people at family fish-camps even in times of conservation. We will adjust the number of Chinook salmon we fish based on the in-season estimates of fish in Alaska and may consider fishing a small number of salmon for ceremonial and dietary purposes, a small "taste", to pass on our knowledge and traditions at family fish-camps.

*"If there is a shortage of fish, even a small harvest is a way of teaching our youth; that we must do more than limit fishing, we must help with spawning salmon by clearing up creeks and monitoring data. We must speak up for the salmon. We must not give up."*

Source: Keeping our Traditions at the Fish-camps

## Łyók K'ún' eŁún k'é tánäts'ile uzhú Łayéts'ile RELEASE THE FEMALES AND SHARING

Our Elders have always traditionally released live females. They are often harder to dry. If there were many females in our nets we would pull them so we would not take too many.

Sharing fish and other foods is a traditional practice that our people have used in the past and is still practiced today.

*"Every household, every Elder, every young family... should get salmon. It is respect. Give widow family member fish, have to look after all family. It is a part of the tradition and responsibility with our rights. People come visit and don't want to ask. Got to share what you have. People used to go along the river, sharing and trading with camps."*

Source: Adapting to Climate Change and Keeping our Traditions

*"Some of my fish I give away to suppers, potlaches, and to other Northern Tutchone people. I add some dry fish and moose meat and they return the favour. Give away and get back."*

Source: Elder, Franklin Roberts



*"Selkirk First Nation does not harvest Chinook salmon out of ignorance, rather for the protection of culture, for dietary reasons and always with respect to the traditional ways."*

Source: SFN Lands, Heritage and Resources Staff





*"The sooner we finish fishing, the better, the more time we have to do other things. I run the net early and get done early."*

Source: Elder, Franklin Roberts

## Hucháa Hudän lyok hutthi tâ'aw yéhemyän TARGET THE EARLY FISH

Our way is to fish for the early Chinook salmon. Our Elders and traditional knowledge tell us that the early fish are smaller, and not the big spawners. If we fish early, then we catch smaller fish. If the run is not so good we change our approach.

In addition to our traditional knowledge, we want to fish early because setting up a fish-camp takes time, planning, and resources. It is not something that can happen on a moment's notice. In 2014 and 2015, the way salmon were managed by the Department of Fisheries and Oceans was very stressful, especially for Elders, who did not know if they would be "allowed" to fish, and had to wait until there were enough fish. By the time they were notified, it was too late, too hard to set up fish-camp on short notice, the fish were not in as good of shape, and the salmon had already passed by the fish-camps.

Later in the season means poor drying conditions with wetter weather and longer smoking time, leaving less time for camp chores.

*"We have already been changing our fishing habits to help counteract climate change and overharvesting by eating other fish, cutting back on fishing and releasing the [live] females in the net. Other ways we can do more include such things as clearing the creeks, so salmon can get to spawning areas, monitoring the spawning salmon and clearing beaver dams."*

Source: Adapting to Climate Change and Keeping our Traditions

## Hucháa Hudän Łyók ezhu yéhemyän HARVEST ALTERNATIVE SPECIES

Our citizens have always lived a traditional lifestyle and eat many traditional foods other than salmon. Our harvest calendar shows which plants and animals to harvest at certain times of the year.

Our people eat many freshwater fish and have special spots in the summer and winter that we can harvest for the entire year. Ta'tla Mun and Lhutsaw lakes are two of many special places we fish for lake trout, whitefish, and northern pike. These are special management areas in the SFN Final Agreement to protect the fish, wildlife and land.

For example Ta'tla Mun Lake is a special management area for us that has many lake trout (mbyaat), lake whitefish (lyok degay) and northern pike (táti). We continue our traditional harvest of these fish and look forward to it each year.

*"Since we cut back on our salmon... we have lots of lakes here on our traditional land with lots of fish - good fish."*

Source: Adapting to Climate Change and Keeping our Traditions (p.20)

### SOME ACTIVITIES THAT CAN BE DONE WHEN SALMON HARVEST IS LOW:

- Walking the land
- Clearing the creeks
- Culture camps at the fish-camps
- Monitoring the river
- Hunt small game like rabbits, gophers, and grouse
- Hunting moose
- Bush survival skills

Source: Keeping Our Traditions At The Fish-Camps





## Thí FALL CHUM SALMON

Fall chum salmon also travel along the Yukon River and have been a traditional food for our citizens. Because it is healthier, we can harvest the fall chum. By fishing Yukon River fall chum, we continue our tradition and we conserve Chinook salmon.

In the past, we fed our many dog teams. Also, there were fur farms that needed fall chum as well. Our dependence on fall chum changed when our lifestyles changed with the use of snowmobiles, a community store, the wage economy and a well-connected road system. In addition, Pelly Crossing was re-located from the shores of the Yukon River which meant they were farther from the fall chum at Minto.

Setting our nets for fall chum still happens in a few community fishing holes along the Yukon River at Minto Landing. Nets have not been set regularly over the last number of years, even though fall chum are still used for some dog food, the hot lunch program for the local school, and generally shared with our Elders and citizens.

We would traditionally smoke fall chum and put the remainder in the deep freeze to eat over winter. Our fall chum fishery happens in late September to October. The chum have travelled a long way to Minto Landing and it is near the end of the run, so only some are taken for human consumption.

We encourage citizens to use fall chum as a way of conserving Pelly River Chinook. We are working towards supporting a fall chum community harvest where the goal is to reintroduce a regular fall chum fishery with Elders and youth at Minto Landing. Elders and youth will work together to harvest and process fish with cooks, canners and others to teach ways to cook, can and preserve fall chum.

In 2014, Selkirk First Nation brought in sockeye salmon by truck to Pelly Crossing from British Columbia. These sockeye were meant to take the pressure off not harvesting Chinook salmon. These fish were without heads and eggs that our Elders enjoy. Due to the high cost, transportation issues, health concerns, and not being true to Dän Ki, this was something that the Selkirk First Nation would likely not consider again.

*“We eat them (Chum) once in a while with a fork when they are fresh out of water.”*

Source: Elder, David Johnny

*“We would take 2,000 Chum salmon in those days for dog teams, we would smoke and dry them into the late fall and then freeze dry them.”*

Source: Elder, Franklin Roberts

*“One time we set a net at Minto and got 65 in one net, it was so heavy that we can’t lift the net and had to get them one by one.”*

Source: Elder, David Johnny

## Shän/Dúyána YOUTH

Fishing for salmon must involve our youth because they are the future. We teach our youth about the salmon by sharing information at fish-camps, at May Gathering and at the Eliza Van Bibber School.

Including youth in the fall chum Culture Camp and creating other youth focused programs, like the spring beaver hunt, is something that is important for SFN.

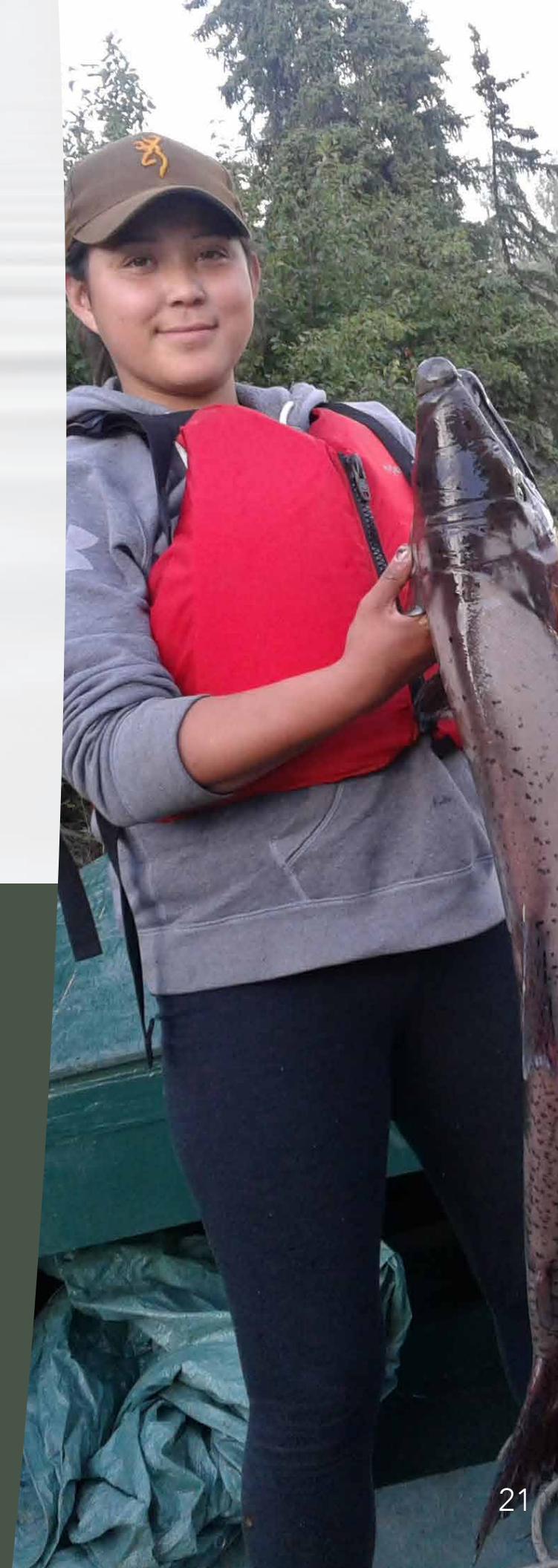
Our Pelly River Sonar is a place where our youth can be employed and educated about their salmon run. Other partners in the community include Yukon College where citizens can take the Fisheries Technician Program.

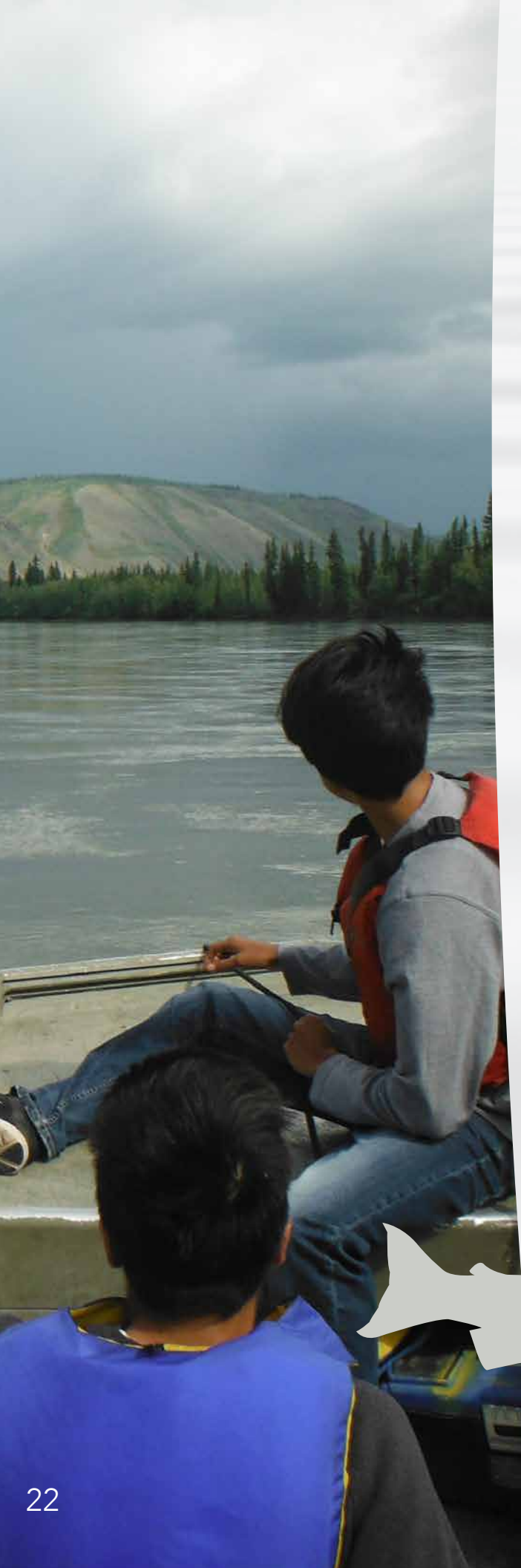
*“We should get our people out to get educated on fisheries so they can become scientists and take care of our fish and the spawning grounds as well.”*

Source: Community Member at a Public Meeting

*“We worry for the younger generation especially; we need to teach them how to survive in this rapidly changing world. Cultural preservation is something very important to our people. The age old practice of fish-camps must be sustained in order to keep our traditions for the wellbeing and security of the next generations.”*

Source: Adapting to Climate Change and Keeping our Traditions





## Duch'i Gyó nádé sóóthän uk'ánaté Gyó anáy etleé dók

### WE CARE ABOUT HABITAT AND STOCK RESTORATION

There are many pressures from mining and other sectors we are facing within our traditional territory. Mining exploration and development, agricultural leases, road access and general industry are active in this area and can affect the air, water, animals, salmon and the other freshwater species. This can also put stress on spawning streams, pressure on habitat and wildlife and generally challenge the balance of nature. We also hear from Elders and citizens about climate change, water quality, and other environmental concerns that are important for citizens.

We have opposed and prevented hydro projects in the past and have seen what has happened with other Northern Tutchone Nations in Mayo on the Upper Mayo River and lakes. This is not something that we would consider in our traditional territory.

We have SFN Fish and Wildlife Monitors actively monitoring the land within the traditional territory. We would like to be more active in monitoring the spawning habitat and water quality along the Pelly River.

We have different projects that focus on rebuilding the stocks or helping habitat such as a small hatchery, stewardship initiatives (such as Salmon in the Classroom), spring beaver hunt, and beaver dam removals. SFN would consider undertaking other stock restoration projects in order to make a contribution to the overall Chinook stocks and as long as it is consistent with our way and we are a key part of the project.



## Ts'ek'inetú Tegé sonar hách'i' Tegé dé Gyó uzhú Tadezhi dók

### OUR PELLY RIVER SONAR

SFN started the Pelly River Sonar project as a pilot project in 2016 that was funded by the Yukon River Panel Restoration and Enhancement fund. The Chinook counting station is located along the Pelly River approximately 24 km downstream from Pelly Crossing.

In the summer of 2017, the sonar project counted Chinook salmon in the lower Pelly River. Other parts of the project include: test netting Chinook to confirm sonar counts between Chinook and other fish species, collecting age, sex and length data from captured Chinook and building our knowledge on the sonar and fisheries related projects in Pelly Crossing.

The plan is for our sonar to run for one full life cycle of the Chinook salmon (approximately 6 years). This will provide more information and a full life-cycle picture with returning adult salmon and will give a more accurate picture of the salmon traveling the Pelly River. This sonar is an improvement on what is normally done to calculate Pelly River salmon and creates a more accurate count.

It is important to have several years of information from this sonar to be able to make decisions around Pelly River salmon.

Some benefits of the sonar include:

- Knowing when the salmon are coming and passing our fish-camps.
- Knowing how many males and females are in the Pelly River.
- Knowing more about the river conditions and water quality monitoring.
- Knowing how our sonar works with other counting projects on the Yukon River such as Pilot Station and Eagle, Alaska.
- Helping to spread the word to our citizens about harvesting and conserving.

This sonar also helps to share our way with other partners such as the Yukon Salmon Sub-Committee (YSSC), the Department of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO) and Alaska fishery agencies. We can also use the sonar to train, inform and employ our youth, Lands, Heritage and Resources staff and citizens.



## Łázhí' ts'elók gyó ye nózotłi

### WE NEED TO KEEP TALKING WITH EACH OTHER ABOUT SALMON

With this plan, we need to keep talking with our citizens. In 2015, we heard about the late opening for fishing Chinook. In 2016, we spent more time talking to citizens and DFO and opened for the next fishing season earlier.

Some of the ways we communicate with citizens include:

- Posting on the community TV Screens at the store in Pelly Crossing and the First Nation office.
- Updating the SFN website, [www.selkirkfn.com](http://www.selkirkfn.com), with our information and counts at Pilot Station, Eagle Sonar and the Pelly River sonar during the fishing season.
- Presenting at the Yukon River Panel, DFO and YSSC meetings. In April 2017, SFN gave a presentation on our approach at the Yukon River Panel meeting in Whitehorse.
- Presenting and providing information at May Gathering and General Assemblies.
- Creating and sharing bulletins and holding community meetings.

We also work and share our information with other Northern Tutchone Nations (Na-Cho Nyak Dun First Nation and Little Salmon Carmacks First Nation) as well as Yukon First Nations and Alaskan stakeholders.



## Zhi déts'ech'ún gyó yendé?

### WHAT WE CAN DO

Our people have used and respected salmon for thousands of years and will continue to do so in the future. With the changing world around us, we will need to adapt in order to support the Pelly River salmon into the future. There are some suggestions for what citizens can do and what our SFN government can do. These suggestions will be flexible, will change and will depend on how the salmon are doing.

#### WHAT CITIZENS CAN DO:

- Continue to fish as a family and follow the harvest guidelines from SFN.
- Try to release females or "egg fish" alive from our nets to let them spawn.
- Use one 50 foot net per camp and 5-6 inch mesh.
- Record your harvest and pass on to SFN.
- Attend salmon meetings hosted by SFN, the YSSC and/or DFO.
- Keep an eye on the condition of the salmon and if you notice any changes in size, males/females, diseases and general quality of the meat and flesh report them to the Department of Lands, Heritage and Resources.
- Work with SFN to share traditional knowledge around salmon.
- Keep sharing and practicing Doòli at fish-camp.
- Practice your family traditions around salmon at camp and sharing with youth.
- Share salmon with families that need it.
- Trap and harvest beavers and remove dams to help salmon.
- Be careful and respectful around salmon spawning streams.
- Harvest fall chum and other freshwater fish and animals to take the pressure off of Chinook.



# WHAT SFN GOVERNMENT CAN DO

- Have a “game plan” before the salmon come and meet with citizens to discuss it.
- Have a plan to adjust when the salmon come if they are many or few.
- Meet with citizens after the fishing season to talk about how the summer went.
- Plan for an early fishery opening for fish-camps to avoid capturing female spawners.
- Have SFN Lands, Heritage and Resources Department visit fish-camps and talk to citizens to see how the salmon are doing.
- Begin to register and mark family fish nets or fishing holes.
- Make presentations on behalf of SFN and citizens at Yukon River Panel, YSSC and DFO meetings.
- Continue to report on harvest.
- Meet with other Northern Tutchone Nations and discuss a joint approach to salmon.
- Purchase a sonar, rather than renting it.
- Create data sharing protocols with other agencies.
- Continue to ask DFO about radiation and other health effects on salmon. Keep track of any changes.
- Work with the Selkirk Renewable Resources Council on some salmon or beaver management projects.
- Continue to work with Elders to document traditional knowledge around salmon, the land and the animals.
- Explore sharing other traditional foods with other First Nations as a way to take the pressure off the Chinook salmon.
- Continue to conduct research that combines indigenous and scientific knowledge.
- Continue communicating with citizens on the TV screens, through meetings, bulletins and on the website.
- Practice a First Fish Ceremony that thanks the Pelly River Salmon for their return with a community feast for example.
- Create signage about important spawning areas and habitat for citizens, hunters and tourists.
- Hold a fall chum harvest at Minto for the citizens with youth and Elders and share the fish and techniques for cooking, smoking and canning at a community celebration.
- Focus on training citizens and youth at the sonar site.
- Hold annual *Salmon in the Classroom* program at the Eliza Van Bibber School.
- Continue to harvest beaver and spring trapping.
- Continue beaver dam removal and spawning streams projects.



## Mussi THANK YOU

Thank you to the Selkirk Elders, Chief and Council, citizens and the community for their continued support in the use and respect of salmon. Thank you to the SFN Lands, Heritage and Resources Department for gathering the information in this Plan.

Special recognition to the work done by SFN and the Arctic Institute of Community Based Research through their two documents *Keeping our Traditions at the Fish-camps: Our Ancestors' Gift to our Youth*, March 2016, and *Adapting to Climate Change and Keeping our Traditions*, March 2016.

Northern Tutchone Translation by: Alyce Joe, Rachel TomTom and Lizzie Hall



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Photo credits: Peter Mather, SFN, EDI, Dennis Zimmermann, Jessica Alfred, Yukon Archives



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Funding provided by:

Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada  
Yukon River Panel's Restoration & Enhancement Fund  
Pacific Salmon Commission

Canada







Northern Tutchone creation story of crow making the world sculpture panel by Eugene Alfred with students from Eliza Van Bibber School