

FREE  
MAGAZINE

Issue 30

# THE FOOTPRINT PRESS



Passages from  
Silverdale, Mission,  
and beyond.

An American Dipper bird is perched on a large, dark, wet rock in a stream. The bird has a greyish-brown head and neck, a white breast, and a blue-grey back and tail. It is looking towards the right. The water in the stream is clear and reflects the surrounding rocks and the bird. The background shows more rocks and the continuation of the stream.

## *Message from the Editorial Committee*

**T**his 30<sup>th</sup> issue of the Footprint Press celebrates the power and beauty of water. All life on earth depends on clean, fresh water. Normally, the land works with plants to absorb excess water during heavy rains, and then releases it during dry periods. The land distributes the water via a myriad of interconnected streams, wetlands, ponds and lakes, while trees and other plants act like a type of sponge, holding water in their tissues, for when needed most.

When this essential relationship between land, plants, and water is disrupted by human activities, the impacts can be devastating to fish and wildlife. When we drain, divert and channel the water in

natural areas, entire ecosystems that depend on that water, are put at risk. When we strip the land of forests, and cover it with roads and other impermeable surfaces, too much water flows too fast down man-made channels, scouring streambanks and contaminating our precious water with sediment and polluted run-off. The result is local fish kills, collapse of ecosystems, and widespread environmental contamination. It is clear that we need to clean up our act, and particularly our water, for the sake of all life, including our own.

After all, we are mostly water.

Cover photo: "Angry Eagle"  
courtesy Rick Skerry.

American Dippers are the only aquatic songbirds in North America. They are intolerant of pollution and therefore an indicator species of clean water.

Dipper photo taken by Mike Stefiuk.

### With Gratitude...

The Footprint Press wishes to thank our writers, photographers and artists, Moneca and Mazell Kolvyn, and all those who have supported us over the years. Special thanks to Paul Berntsen and Nicole Bellay for their generous donation which helped make this issue possible. Finally, we would like to express our deepest gratitude to Nik Cuff, who designs each and every issue with care and dedication.

# Gravel mining in Norrish Creek: Big trouble for Salmon

**H**istoric swimming pools under a CPR bridge over Norrish Creek near Deroche are only “knee deep” following gravel extractions (1). This is sad for swimmers but it’s worse for salmon. The riverbed, lowered three meters from gravel extraction, has dried-up side-channels, ending fish spawning or rearing. Several productive streams nearby are also fed by the Norrish Creek aquifer. On Dec. 5, I called

the Dept. of Fisheries hotline to report hundreds of dead adult salmon on a bone-dry Worth Creek bed, that relies on that source. Without a reliable source of water, the eggs buried here would be dead. On Dec. 8 when I returned to Worth Creek for another look, the water had returned. More coho were spawning, but reliable sources tell me it was “mostly dry” again on Jan. 22. If it suddenly drains completely in the future, more eggs will perish. In the spring, any surviving fry would be stranded. Why is this stream going up and down?

Consider the loss in this one stream system alone. Worth Creek saw 7240 chum spawners in 1984, and 500 coho in 1988. Are more nearby creeks threatened? Records show Chilqua Slough has produced 11,000 chum; Railroad Creek, 400 coho; Hawkins Creek, up to 200 coho; Inch Creek, the first Salmon Enhancement channel improvement (1970), up to 7500 chum and 400 coho. Could they all go dry?

No one knows yet, but on January 9, in search of an answer to what happened at Worth Creek, biologists, Marvin Rosenau and John Werring, along with Chris Clevette of Iron Horse Media (2), and I, walked along a high man-made dyke or “berm” on the west bank of Norrish Creek with Global News reporter, Paul Johnson (3). It’s a short walk from Worth Creek to the much bigger, Norrish Creek. The biologists say the two streams are connected by groundwater. Had that connection been interrupted? Destroyed?

“The water level in Norrish,” explains Werring, “would normally be high enough here to push surrounding ground water laterally to side-channels and creeks like Worth. But they’ve lowered the water table in Norrish. That means there’s no hydraulic side-ways pressure to do that.”

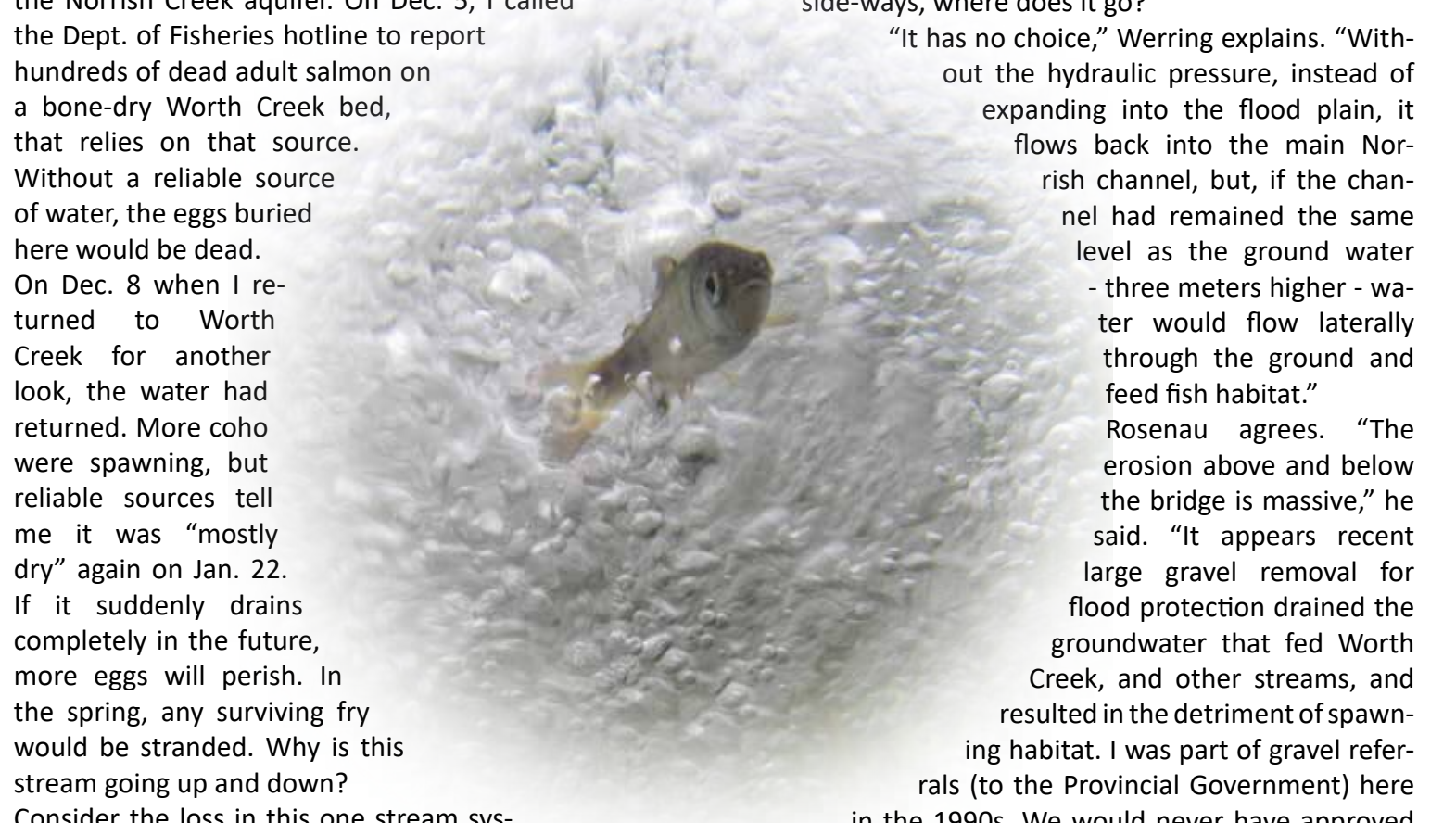
So, if ground water from a large aquifer isn’t encouraged side-ways, where does it go?

“It has no choice,” Werring explains. “Without the hydraulic pressure, instead of expanding into the flood plain, it flows back into the main Norrish channel, but, if the channel had remained the same level as the ground water - three meters higher - water would flow laterally through the ground and feed fish habitat.”

Rosenau agrees. “The erosion above and below the bridge is massive,” he said. “It appears recent large gravel removal for flood protection drained the groundwater that fed Worth Creek, and other streams, and resulted in the detriment of spawning habitat. I was part of gravel referrals (to the Provincial Government) here

in the 1990s. We would never have approved this amount of material. This activity on Norrish looks to me like pure environmental rape. Now, the whole river (Norrish) is eroding because of the gravel industry.” Werring said ‘they’ lowered the water level. Who is they? According to DFO Habitat Protection manager, Murray Manson, it’s CP Railway. “There’s a lot of gravel removal going on,” he said for an article I wrote for the Maple Ridge News in December (4). “CP is worried about protecting their bridge. Maybe they dug a deep hole and it’s draining on one side.”

Was the gravel extraction approved by the DFO? “I think it was authorized,” said Manson. “We went ahead with a Letter of Advice.” In 2012, the Steven Harper government weakened the Fisheries Act by turning a lot of stream development oversight to private industry. Letters of Advice are a do-it-yourself guide for proponents on projects near water.



**Hundreds of spawners in a bone-dry Worth Creek. Photo courtesy Jack Emberly.**



**Norrish Creek streambed January 2025 shows a high man-made berm mid-stream that diverts the watercourse to the far left, leaving a dry Worth Creek on the right side. Photo courtesy Jack Emberly.**

“That’s a major problem”, warns Werring. “We need a complete overhaul of the entire project-approval process, beginning with more robust public notification. We also need greater transparency so that relevant documents and studies by qualified professionals are subject to public scrutiny. No more hiding documents behind a wall of confidentiality or claims of ‘proprietary information’. These public resources should be managed with the public interest in mind.”

Reliable sources say Worth Creek may remain “ineffective as a salmon-spawning and juvenile refuge for decades.” A suggested first step in reversing the damage to Norrish Creek could be to return the river to its pre-2021 levels.

Do we need an independent oversight committee to monitor development going forward? That committee could include the DFO, but so far, they haven’t been effective. When I called chum assessment manager, Matt Townsend about Worth Creek in early December, he said he wasn’t even funded to monitor fish there in 2024, and had in fact, just learned about a dry Worth Creek. “I shudder to think what we’re missing in other little streams like this,” he said.

If B.C. salmon are to survive, we can’t lose them through inattention. The gravel industry is drooling over the prospects of further mining in this entire salmon-producing area. There’s a posted mining application sign on a field opposite Worth Creek, erected in 2024. Yet, DFO says it was only notified of it (for possible review) by the Ministry of Mines on January 17, 2025. Why? “If the project goes ahead without environmental safeguards”, says Werring, “Worth Creek, and maybe others, could be lost forever”.

### **Jack Emberly, Maple Ridge**

#### **Notes:**

- 1) Search “Knee deep” at:  
<https://www.missioncityrecord.com/news>
- 2) Search Worth creek Along the Fraser at:  
<https://www.youtube.com>
- 3) Search gavel removal salmon kill and select video at:  
<https://globalnews.ca>
- 4) search “fluctuating creek salmon” at:  
<https://www.mapleridgenews.com>



Salmon photos courtesy Mike Stefiuk.

The momentum is building! Over 11,000 passionate British Columbians have signed a Declaration urging local governments to take bold action, by joining a class action lawsuit against major fossil fuel companies. This movement is a shining example of communities standing together for justice and climate accountability.

Already, eight BC municipalities—Sechelt, Port Moody, Burnaby, Squamish, Gibsons, View Royal, Slokan, and Qualicum Beach—have stepped up to lead the charge. These trailblazing communities have pledged \$1 per resident to support the legal case, sending a clear message: it's time for polluters to pay for the harm they've caused.

At over \$8 billion, 2024 was the costliest year ever for insurance of extreme weather events in Canada. However the Sue Big Oil campaign isn't just about tackling the financial burden of climate change—it's about hope, fairness, and creating a better future. Together, we're saying "enough is enough" to the droughts, heat waves, wildfires, floods and rising seas fueled by unchecked fossil fuel pollution. By holding the world's largest polluters accountable, we're turning the tide for our planet and future generations.

This isn't just a local movement. Over 70 cities and states in the US are taking similar legal steps. Here in Canada, top legal minds are backing this effort, reaffirming that the "polluter pays" principle is not just a dream—it's a foundation for justice.

Every signature, and every city that joins the cause brings us closer to a historic victory. The fossil fuel companies knew decades ago what their products would do to our planet—and they chose profits over people. Now, communities are standing together to demand accountability and action.

You can play a key role in the Sue Big Oil campaign by signing the online declaration at [suebigoilmission.ca](https://suebigoilmission.ca). Already, nearly 400 Mission residents have added their voices. Want to do even more? You can easily send a pre-written email to the Mission City Council by clicking on the "Convince the City Council to Join the Campaign" button. Every email makes a difference and helps show the Council that this is a cause the community cares deeply about.

In the spring of 2025, a delegation from Building Resilience in Mission (BRIM) will present the Sue Big Oil campaign to the Mission Environmental Charter Advisory Committee, bringing this vital issue to the forefront. Together, we can ensure Mission takes a stand for climate justice and a sustainable future.

Let's keep the momentum going and get Mission to join! When communities unite, change is not only possible—it's unstoppable.

**Nicole Bellay**, BRIM

Big Oil Monster Tidal Wave- Original art by **Jack Gauthier AKA MEYOW**, Metis/Anishinaabe Artist from Treaty 1 Territory.

<https://www.instagram.com/meyowart/>

## Exciting Progress on the Sue Big Oil Campaign!



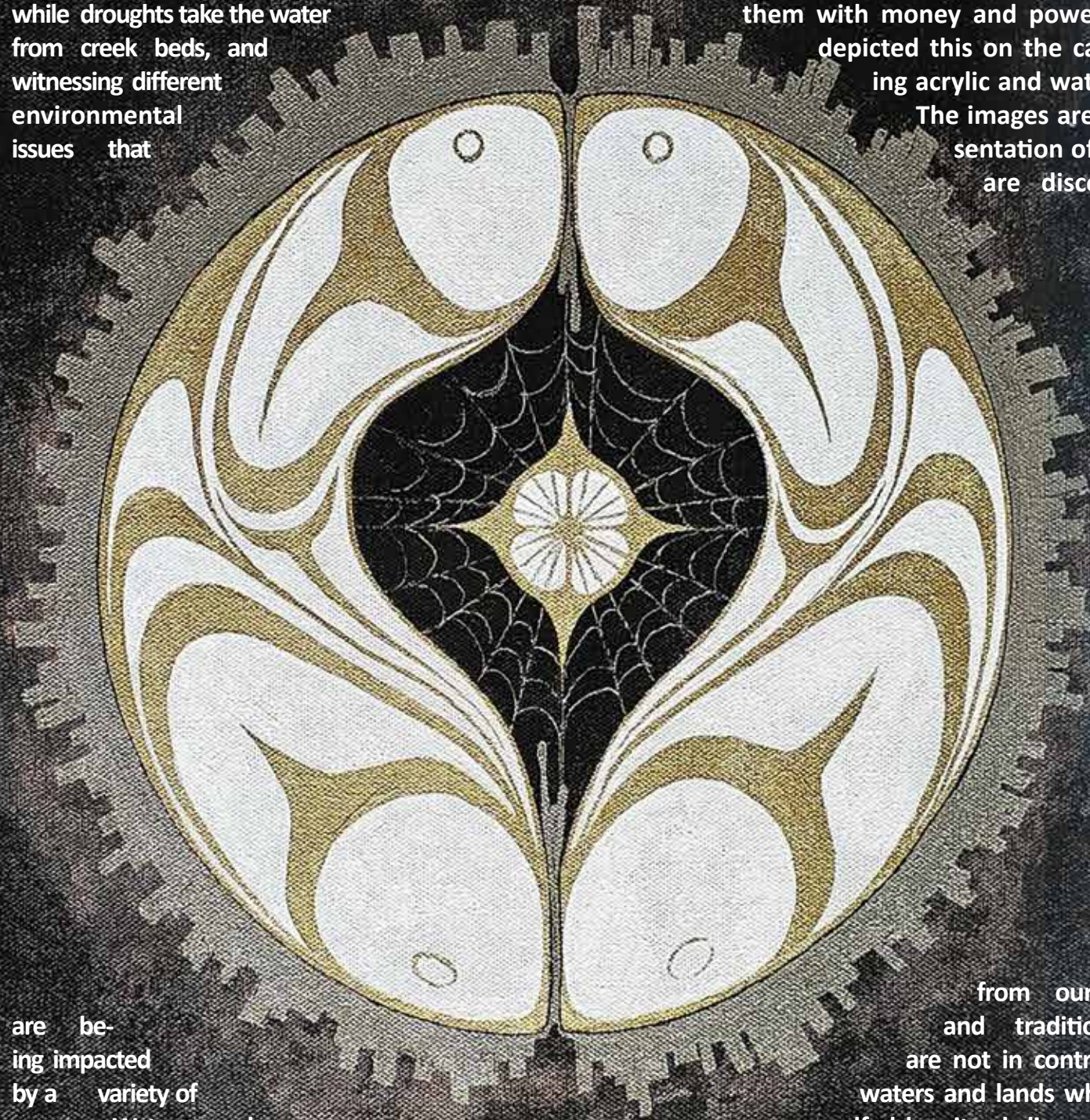
# Mímexwel / nteqwtíqw "Unclean Water"

This first canvas reflects the world I grew up in while witnessing climate change, and the pollution that has increased rapidly over the years. I'm seeing the snow caps decrease to nothing, while droughts take the water from creek beds, and witnessing different environmental issues that

and spawning deterrents which prevent the salmon from spawning in their natural habitat, are taking away our sacred and traditional lands, that are important to our cultures, and replacing them with money and power. I have depicted this on the canvas using acrylic and watercolour. The images are a representation of how we are disconnected

are being impacted by a variety of reasons. Water vessel traffic, pipelines, highways and railroads, among many other man-made structures, have been, and are still being, placed along waterways. These structures are causing a rapid decline in many different species and their habitats, including salmon and their spawning channels. Open-net pen fish farms,

from our culture and traditions. We are not in control of our waters and lands while being engulfed by city skylines and technology. This is shown in silver chrome surrounding the disconnected salmon with blank eyes, a visual representation of our blindness from "economic development," our lack of taking measures to restore and conserve our environment, and our failure to remember why it is important to do so.



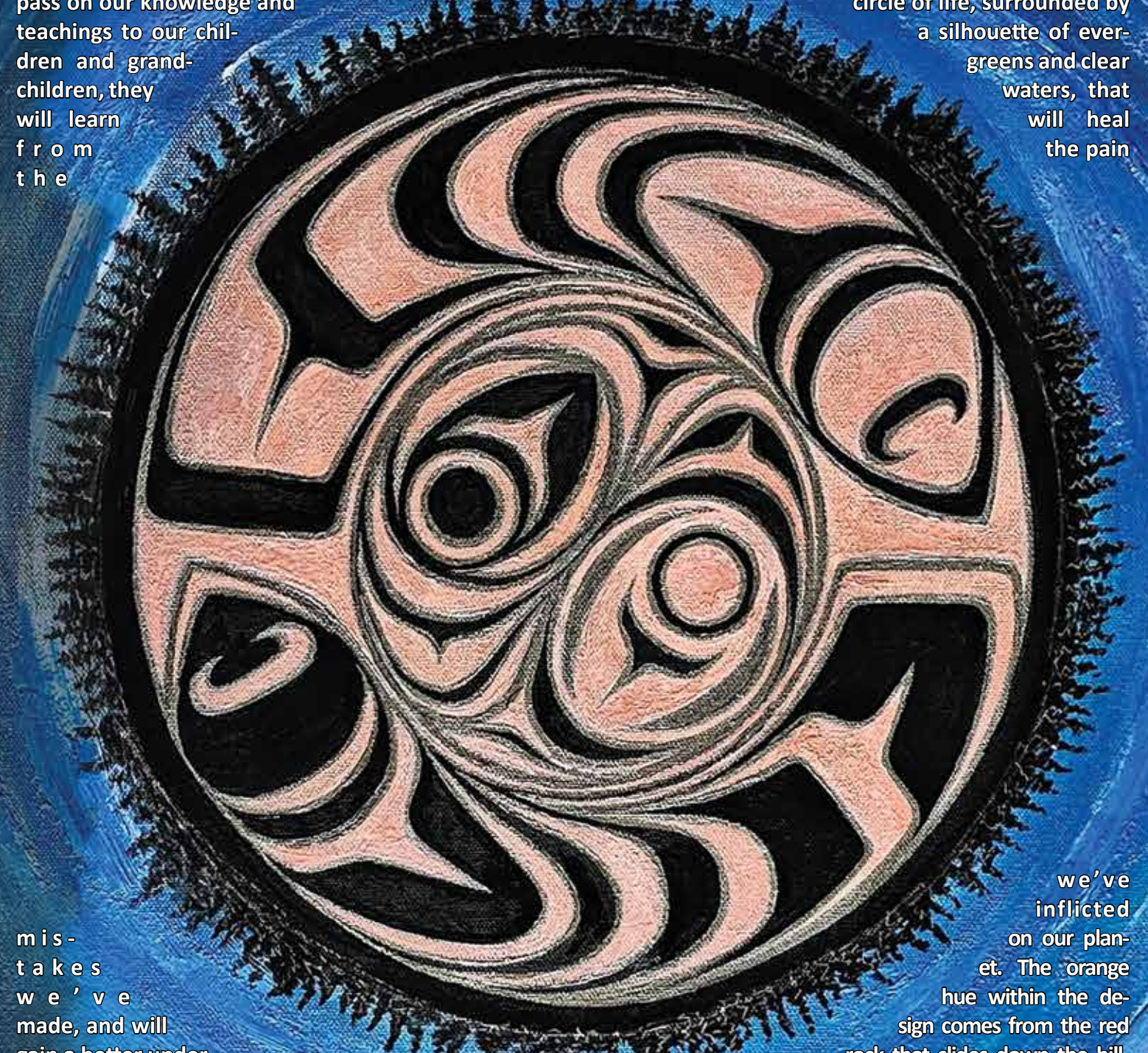
# q'éytl'thet / qít "heal"

This second canvas represents how I would like to see our world for our future generations; clean, healthy and connected. If we continue to care for our environment and our watersheds, and pass on our knowledge and teachings to our children and grandchildren, they will learn from the

ing our lands safe and healthy, for all our futures. I have used a variety of mediums and colours to reflect the mission and values within the canvas, by creating the salmon cycle that continues the circle of life, surrounded by a silhouette of evergreens and clear waters, that will heal the pain

mistakes we've made, and will gain a better understanding of how important our planet is. They will guide and help educate others about the importance of not just our watersheds, but our lands and the species that need our help, in order to continue the work of keep-

we've inflicted on our planet. The orange hue within the design comes from the red rock that slides down the hillside into the Fraser River along the Fraser Canyon. I created a watercolour blend with the rock to incorporate into the painting, representing one of our most important watersheds within the S'ólh Téméxw and the St'at'imc Nation, both areas that I have called home.



Artwork by Vanessa Serroul, St'at'imc Nation (Xwísten)

## Sprawl report: Contamination of local streams and salmon habitat

Wild salmon require healthy habitat throughout their life cycle to thrive and return in abundance. They are an indicator species, whose numbers reflect impacts to critical habitat. These include spawning and rearing inland habitats, ocean migration routes, feeding areas, and everything in between. As with other local at-risk species, including painted turtles, red legged frogs, and many others, every habitat link in the salmon lifestyle chain needs to be healthy for there to be abundant returns.

Recognizing the importance of salmon to the wider ecosystem, considerable public and private money and resources have been directed towards salmon habitat rehabilitation. Wild salmon activists and First Nations have succeeded in forcing the removal of over 40 open-net pen fish farms from the Broughton Archipelago, Discovery Islands, and Sechelt Inlet. This is due to evidence of harms the open-net pen farms pose to wild salmon, including amplification of pathogens and ocean habitat degradation. The salmon have responded very well, fueling calls to remove the remaining 60 open-net pen farms. There has also been success with the rehabilitation of inland habitats, such as the removal of culverts that block fish passage, and the enhancements to spawning and rearing habitats (e.g., Lower Stave River and Hope Slough). Sadly, ongoing habitat degradation and contamination continues to stress fragile ecosystems, and as development spreads across the landscape, more watersheds are being impacted. In B.C., there are over 170,000 road crossings at streams containing fish habitat, and developments and roadways are often built within meters from waterways. Storm water runoff from impermeable surfaces and roads carries a cocktail of pesticides, PCBs and chemicals like 6PPDs from car tires, many

of which are toxic to fish. Municipal stormwater infrastructure can deliver these toxins directly to streams. Recent research from the University of British Columbia has linked high levels of road salt to death of Coho salmon eggs in numerous streams throughout the lower mainland. The magnitude of the problem is huge. In addition to slowly leaching contaminants, catastrophic spills into local waterways are occurring with alarming frequency.

In May 2021, foam pillows up to eight feet high rolled down Clayburn creek in Abbotsford after rain washed laundry detergent from the rooftops of a nearby townhome complex into the water. In July 2024, a large spill of firefighting foam was released into the city's storm water system which flowed into Stoney Creek, resulting in fish mortality and a noxious smell reported by residents. In Sept. 2024 a large spill in the historic

Hope Slough waterway led to the death of thousands of juvenile Coho salmon, trout and the endangered Salish Sucker. The area was rehabilitated by local First Nations, who discovered the spill. At the time of printing, the cause of the contamination had not been identified. However a similar discharge has occurred since the initial incident, when white and grey sludge was seen pouring out of a pipe into a ditch that runs into the slough. These are but a few recent examples of local stream and wetland contamination. Many other spills are no doubt occurring, but not observed or reported. Recent studies indicate stream and wetland contamination is a widespread problem, but there is regulatory confusion as to who is responsible for the toxins in storm water. According to West Coast Environmental Law, while municipalities are responsible for treating their sewage, with oversight from the Provincial Envi-

ronmental Management Act and the Federal Fisheries Act, there is no legal requirement for municipalities to monitor the quality of stormwater discharge into municipal drainage systems. Integrated Storm water management plans, when they exist, are not required to include ecosystem health indicators. Thus, while high profile spills into waterways can be prosecuted, (e.g., Mt. Polly mining disaster), there seems to be little accountability for cumulative toxic impacts to streams from multiple sources. This is a serious public health issue, as many of the contaminants linked to fish mortality are also toxic to humans. Microplastics, pesticides, forever chemicals and other substances are now being found in human bodies, and growing evidence suggests, in addition to cancer, some may be linked to chronic diseases such as dementia and heart disease. Thus, in the long run, changes that prevent contamination of salmon ecosystems will also benefit human health. Clearly, change is required in how we design our cities and manage stormwater.

It may be that the remedy to address engineered contamination of our waterways, lies in natural systems. In addition to larger setbacks from streams and wetlands, the use of natural "green infrastructure" in developments and along roadsides, (e.g., bioswales, rain gardens, and urban tree canopies), can prevent stormwater contamination from entering waterways. Green infrastructure reduces reliance on grey infrastructure (i.e. pipes), and helps the land regulate the hydrology of the area during wet and dry periods. Nature based solutions are less expensive to maintain, and support local wildlife species, in addition to salmon.

It is time to take our connections to water seriously, and to adopt a comprehensive approach to ensure critical habitats are not destroyed by our heavy hands. Then, and only then, will wild salmon thrive and fulfill their life purpose, to the benefit of all who depend on pure fresh water.

**Tracy Lyster, CAUSS**



American Dipper and Salmon photos courtesy Mike Stefiuk.



# The Rare and Elusive Black Swift

If you've ever been to a waterfall in the South-coast of British Columbia, you might be lucky enough to encounter a Black Swift; one of the largest swifts in North America. According to the Taxonomy of Birds, this species is traditionally part of the Apodiformes order, a grouping of birds containing three families: Swifts, Treeswifts and Hummingbirds, with Hummingbirds being regarded as the Swifts' closest relatives.

The Black Swift is an aerial insectivore and has an important role within our ecosystem by helping control the flying insect population. They fly at high altitudes over open country and forests to forage exclusively for aerial insects, such as flying ants, wasps, flies and sometimes spiders, catching up to 10,000 insects a day. The adults will leave at sunrise and return at sunset, with the exception of the incubation or brooding period, when the parents will alternate between roles.

The Swifts build their small mossy residences within niches and crevices that are close to waterfalls and canyons. They choose these locations as their nesting sites for breeding and staying safe from potential predators, preferring locations with no direct sunlight and unobstructed flight paths.

The Black Swift's first breeding starts between 3-5 years. The female will lay one egg in this inaccessible nest site between June and July, incubating it until around August, and feeding the nestling until around the end of September. There is a low rate of nest attendance except for feeding or brooding, and the visits become less frequent, the older the chick gets. Black Swifts can live up to 16 years, but studies have shown a negative trend, with the population declining by more than 50% over a 40-year period. There are estimated to be approximately 15,000 to 60,000 mature Black Swifts throughout North America, with 80% located in Canada; the majority within British Columbia. The Black Swift has been designated Endangered since May 2015 and is considered Vulnera-

ble according to the Species at Risk Act. Issues such as climate change, pollution, use of pesticides and other factors, play a part in the declining number of nesting sites and maturing adults we see today, even compared to a few years ago. Climate change brings hotter weather and droughts, which puts the Black Swift nesting sites at risk from glacial melt and decreased snowpacks. Also in the summer, when people want to find new water sources for their recreational activities, the Black Swift habitats can become crowded and noisy, causing disturbances during the critical nesting period.

Since 2022, Birds Canada has been in collaboration with local First Nation communities to survey Black Swift nest sites that are located around the Fraser Valley with fluctuating results in how many nests are remaining active each year, and how many chicks are being born. This has hatched some ideas on how to mitigate some of the issues that are preventing the Black Swifts from migrating back to these areas from as far as their wintering habitat in Brazil. Habitat conservation is very important to consider in these nesting areas and measures should be taken to protect these sites so the Black Swift will migrate back each year.

Surveying for Black Swifts is crucial to gain a better understanding of the species and how to prevent their decline while putting together an action plan to keep their nesting areas safe. Surveys usually require hiking up mountain trails and through rough terrain to catch a glimpse of their nesting sites, so the work can be very dangerous, which is why there is so little known about the Black Swift.

To do our part in preventing a further decrease in their numbers, we can share the knowledge gained through research and surveys so the Black Swifts, among many other endangered species living within our watersheds, continue to play an important role in our ecosystem, and have a chance at a future.

**Vanessa Serroul, St'át'imc Nation (Xwísten)**

The art piece reflects the Black Swift in its natural habitat foraging for aerial insects from dawn until dusk before returning back to its nest by the waterfall. The background represents sunrise and sunset but also plays into environmental issues such as pollution and declining forests. **Vanessa Serroul**





Image of a Black Swift captured by Vanessa Serroul during surveying.

## Ey Stelmexw St'etl'ilem - Good Medicine Songs

The Good Medicine Songs are bilingual songs in English and Upriver Halq'eméylem, language of the Stó:lō, originating in Leq'á:mel: the level place where people meet. These songs hold educational, ecological, cultural and historical teachings. Dr. Síyam-iyatelíyót Elizabeth Phillips is the Spiritual Guide and Knowledge Holder for this project.

The passion and intent from this devoted team of Stó:lō and non-Indigenous talents, is so deeply embedded in the music that after learning to sing even one song, it becomes evident to the observer, listener and performer, where the good medicine exists: when community collaborates with an open heart and mind, singing together in a good way, good things come to heal each other and Mother Earth.

From June 4-6, 2024, the GOOD MEDICINE SONGS (GMS) Team - Stó:lō artists and musicians, Maddi Krulicki and Xótxwes Jonny Williams, along with musicians Holly Arntzen and Kevin Wright (members of The Wilds Band and co-founders of the GMS) - came to Ecole Christine Morrison Elementary for a 3 day intensive workshop and concert program with all 18 classes in the school (1).

The name of this project was l'XEL SQ'EQ'OTEL-PULLING TOGETHER, and was sponsored by a Social Emotional Learning (SEL) Grant through the Mission School District, along with funds from a Mission Community Foundation Grant for the music program. Two GMS sponsors kicked off the educational journey when they came to

the school for Earth Day in 2024, along with Holly and Kevin, to teach students about recycling and reducing the ecological footprint of old tires and used oil (2). Students even got to sing a couple of Good Medicine Songs with them.

The very first song all students learned was Shwxeli-Life Spirit. The message of stewardship, that everyone is a caretaker of Mother Earth, and that she has life spirit, presents a powerful message to children that all life depends on the relationship with the environment, which must be protected.

Each class, along with the Music teacher and Judy Cathers, Indigenous Liaison Worker, had the opportunity to make a Shxweli-Life Spirit banner. The banner included Stó:lō teachings of the Medicine Wheel and the four elements of the environment: air, fire, earth and water. Buttons, ribbon and fabric were chosen to represent Coast Salish design and teachings about Indigenous Peoples across the continent. These banners were entered into a BCTF Climate Justice poster contest and won in the Indigenous category. Most of these banners have now been given away as gifts to show gratitude for all the people who helped to make this project come to life. Students Bria and Nadia interviewed their Indigenous Liaison Worker about the Good Medicine Songs Project and from the responses to the 5 main interview questions, emerged the core learning (in the format of a haiku):



Drum made by Darren Charlie with Eagle artwork by Ron Fowler and drum stick by Herman Dan. Photo courtesy Kevin Wright.



Good medicine will connect with Stó:lō people teachings and language through song.

Notes:

- 1) <https://www.artistresponseteam.com>
- 2) <https://tsbc.ca> and <https://interchangerecycling.com>

Students in Div. 12 (French) and Div. 3 (English) have summed up their understanding of why these songs are good medicine, through a collaborative found poem based on lessons learned from the Good Medicine Songs:

belonging  
 knowledge  
 ecology  
 elders  
 teamwork  
 peace  
 sacred salmon  
 pulling together  
 Sto:lo Culture  
 life spirit  
 community  
 cedar tree  
 music  
 mother earth  
 reconciliation  
 healing  
 Shxweli

C. Schaufert,  
 Music Teacher

Student performance and art photos courtesy

C. Schaufert.

Composite photo by  
 Nik Cuff



## Where the Grass is Long

**I** feel such a deep sense of peace and a feeling of home in the long grass and tall flowers. There's a remembrance of when we were once wild, free and connected to the land. When we understood the balance of nature and had reverence for all life and the roles each of us plays.

How would the world change if we brought that same understanding and reverence of nature to our food and agriculture? Our forestry? Land planning and development? The handling of our natural resources?

What if we lived in harmony and unity with the planet and stepped away from our domestication and separation from nature?

*What a beautiful place that would be....*

*Or maybe, I just belong where the grass is long....*

*Oh I belong  
Where the grass is long  
The flowers grow free  
And my heart's happy  
Cuz I belong  
In nature's song  
Where the waters flow free  
And the vibes easy*

*Oh I belong  
Where hair is long  
Bare feet go free  
Run wild with me  
Cuz I belong  
Like that old drum song  
Where my spirit soars free  
Come fly with me*

*Oh I belong  
Where the days are long  
My fire burns free  
Far from society  
Cuz I belong  
Where freedom ain't wrong  
Love grows free  
And we live in unity*

*Oh we belong  
Where all stand strong  
Our choices are free  
And we choose sovereignty  
Cuz we belong  
Singing our song  
So set your voices free  
Sing your song with me*



Eagle round carving by  
Peter Gong, Mission.  
American dipper photo  
courtesy Mike Stefiuk.



## THE FOOTPRINT PRESS

The Footprint press is published by CAUSS, registered nonprofit society. Articles, artwork and photography are submitted by scientists, local Indigenous and environmental activists, and others wishing to share their vision of a more just and informed society, and who seek to live harmoniously with nature in a shared environment. Circulation is 3,000+

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