

Secwépemc Landmarks Project celebrates installation of first trailhead post

Media Release: June 4th, 2021

The Secwépemc Landmarks project partners are pleased to announce the installation of the first trailhead post, one of a series of almost 100, which will be installed on trail systems throughout the Shuswap Lakes region. Shuswap Middle School hosted an unveiling ceremony for their trailhead post on June 1st, 2021, to mark the beginning of Indigenous Peoples History Month. Indigenous Education Workers Theresa Johnson and Kaeli Hawrys, and wood shop teacher Brian Gerbrandt, organized the event in partnership with the Secwépemc Landmarks Project partners, and hosted carving classes with students at Shuswap Middle School. The trailhead posts were carved by youth from Chief Atahm School (Adams Lake Band), Shihiya school (Splatsín), and four schools in School District No. 83 (Shuswap Middle School, Jackson, Sullivan, and South Canoe Outdoor School), under the instruction of Secwépemc storyteller Kenthen Thomas and Secwépemc carvers Hop You and Vern Clemah.

The purpose of the project is to highlight Secwépemc stories, voices, and relationships with the landscape from past, present, and future generations. The students' carvings tell the *stsptékwle* (oral history) of "Coyote and the Salmon", which Secwépemc storyteller Kenthen Thomas describes as telling the story of how *Se'klep* (Coyote) brought salmon to the *Sxwesméllep* (also known as *Sxwetsméllep* or Salmon Arm) area. The trailhead posts are a deep reminder of the presence and significance of past, present, and future generations of Secwépemc communities and their relationship to lands and waters in the Pespeséllkwe caretaker area of Secwepemcúlcw.

Speakers also honoured the survivors of the Kamloops Residential School present at the event, and gave a recognition of the collective heaviness from the remains of the 215 children recently found at the Kamloops Residential School in Tkémilúps te Secwépemc. Splatsín Knowledge Keeper Ethel Thomas opened the event with a prayer, and speakers included Kukpi7 (Chief) Wayne Christian, Tkwemiple7 (Councillor) Brad Arnouse, Tkwemiple7 Louis Thomas, Knowledge Keeper Julianna Alexander, North Okanagan-Shuswap MP Mel Arnold, District Principal of Indigenous Education and Curriculum Anne Tenning, Jen Bellhouse from the Shuswap Trail Alliance, and Stephanie Goodey from Shuswap Tourism.

This stage of the project was a collaborative effort that was funded and led by Adams Lake Band, Neskonlith Band, and Splatsín, with funding and capacity support from the BC Rural Dividend Program (Province of BC), Heritage BC, the City of Salmon Arm, the Shuswap Trail Alliance, and Shuswap Tourism. Stella-Jones donated the 100 cedar trailhead posts, and Hardrock Granite kindly donated drilling holes through each of the rocks. Tkwemiple7 (Councillor) Shelley Witzky from Adams Lake Band is the in-kind Project Lead for the Secwépemc Landmarks Project, with the trailhead post and sculpture concept designs created by Tkwemiple7 Shelley and Sutra Brett from the Shuswap Trail Alliance, with the guidance and support of the Secwepemc Lakes Elders Advisory Committee. The Secwépemc Landmarks team is grateful for the guidance of the Secwépemc Lakes Elders Advisory Committee, made up of Elders from the four local communities (Neskonlith Band, Splatsín, Adams Lake Band, and Little Shuswap Lake Band), and the many stories and guidance they shared for this project.



Figure 1 Shuswap Middle School students Jeremiah Vergera and Darah Thurston unveiling the trailhead post they carved in the Shuswap Middle School workshops. Photo by Martha Wickett, Salmon Arm Observer.



Figure 2 Secwépemc Knowledge Keeper and storyteller Kenthen Thomas leading "Coyote and the Salmon" storytelling workshop for youth to create their original designs.



Figure 3 Secwépemc Knowledge Keeper and carving instructor Hop You with Shuswap Middle School students Jeremiah Vergera and Darah Thurston.



Figure 4 District Indigenous Helping Teacher Meredith Rusk and Secwépemc Landmarks Project Lead Tkwemiple7 Shelley Witzky, Adams Lake Band.



Figure 5 Tkwemiple7 Brad Arnouse and Kukpi7 Wayne Christian, photo by Martha Wickett, Salmon Arm Observer.



Figure 6 Splantsín Elder Ethel Thomas, Photo by Martha Wickett, Salmon Arm Observer.



Figure 7 Splantsín Elder Julianna Alexander, Photo by Martha Wickett, Salmon Arm Observer.



Figure 8 Tkwemiple7 Brad Arnouse MC's the trailhead post unveiling



Figure 9 Photos from the Shuswap Middle School Trailhead Post Workshops, photo by Martha Wickett, Salmon Arm Observer.



Figure 10 Tkwemiple7 Louis Thomas, Tkwemiple7 Brad Arnouse, and project partner City of Salmon Arm Mayor Alan Harrison. Photo by Martha Wickett, Salmon Arm Observer.



Figure 11 North Okanagan-Shuswap MP Mel Arnold speaking at the Secwépemc Landmarks trailhead post unveiling.



Figure 12 Libby Chisholm, Secwépemc Landmarks Project Coordinator; Phil McIntyre-Paul, Senior Consultant at the Shuswap Trail Alliance; Tkwemiple7 Louis Thomas, Neskonlith Band; Jen Bellhouse, Executive Director of the Shuswap Trail Alliance; and Sutra Brett, Technical Lead, standing next to the trailhead post carved by Shuswap Middle School students Jeremiah Vergera and Darah Thurston. Photo by Martha Wickett, Salmon Arm Observer. Missing from photo: Tkwemiple7 Shelley Witzky, Adams Lake Indian Band, In-kind Project Lead.