



# PELLT'ÉXEL'CTEN



QWELMİNTE SECWÉPEMC NEWSLETTER



Pellt'éxel'cten is the Secwepemctsin word for August, which means it's time to go upstream. To the Secwépemc, this is a time to harvest salmon, where they would be on the riverbanks dip netting, harpooning, setting net or spearing salmon to harvest and take home to prepare for their winters. Today, there are many concerns for both our waters and the salmon which we rely on to feed our families through the winter months.

As we enter the salmon season once again, we want to reflect on who we are as Secwépemc / Indigenous people and what it means to look after one another as Kwséltken (family). This month we feature Laureen Felix from Splatstin and what she has learned from her father, Casimir Felix. Her words awaken the memories of being with family out on the river and the smell of smoke racks, bringing a reminder of our deep connection to water and salmon held since time immemorial.

## ***Who was your Knowledge Keeper?***

My dad, Casimir Felix, was a traditional hunter and gatherer within our community, and taught me how to spear and harpoon. Starting when I was 6 and my brother was 7, he would take us up to our traditional fishing spot, Hupple. He sat us both down by the river to explain to us the importance of ceremony and what we were to do before going spearing, to thank the salmon, to thank the water and the Creator for the gift that he gave us.

## ***What is the importance of this knowledge to you and to your community?***

If there's one thing that I could teach with harpooning, it would be to always think of your people and keep them in the back of your mind when you're harvesting any kind of food.

It's not just you that needs food for the winter or medicines; we all have to survive through the winter, through the good times and the hard times. My dad always provided for our people and taught me to do the same.

## ***How are you ensuring that it is being carried forward to the next generation?***

I strongly feel harpooning and spearing is getting forgotten as each generation comes up. I'm one of the last people that still harpoon on the river every year since I was 6 years old, and I am now 44. I still go out every fall on thanksgiving weekend up to Hupple. If there is no fish I bless my harpoon and spear and sing the salmon song and pray for our salmon to return home. So, I ensure that it gets passed on through our family and try to inform others to come up there and try.