

Yecwmenú'ecwmens re Tsyeq'w

Those who take care of the land fires.

QWELMÍNTE SECWÉPEMC NEWSLETTER

Skeetchestn member Samantha Draney has been with Skeetchestn Natural Resources for 8 years in the Cultural Heritage Department. This summer, she spent 50 days on the front line of the Sparks Lake and Tremont Creek fires.



Who were your mentors?

I had three key mentors. My grandmother was my best friend growing up, and we spent a lot of time together connecting to the land. She taught me about the plants and medicines and appreciate her as a living being. My dad taught me everything he knew; it didn't matter who you were, it was about getting the job done and being of service to your community. Darrel Peter is a hunter who has lived off the land his whole life. He is the knowledge keeper and taught me to visually survey the land.

How did your knowledge differ from the western view of the land?

There is a natural connection that's always been there between the land and our Team, we support each other as equals. I was off in the territory to be the eyes, and Darrel was the one that managed the people and deciphered my information. While we identified cultural heritage spots that we wanted to save, BC Wildfire Service made decisions based on economic value.

What are the future plans regarding prevention and suppression of wildfires?

It is important that we get youth out on the land and build their connection to tmicw through ceremony and passing of traditional ecological knowledge. We'll continue working with our neighboring communities to protect our respective caretaker areas. It can't just be government and ministry level; every community including local ranchers have to get involved, with our input being taken onto the landscape. BC needs to Indigenize their lens when looking at the land. We are here and we are always going to be watching the land as our ancestors have done since time immemorial.

WWW.QWELMINTE.CA



Photo Credit: Samantha Draney