

Honouring The Vision Of Our Ancestors

Who is SSN?

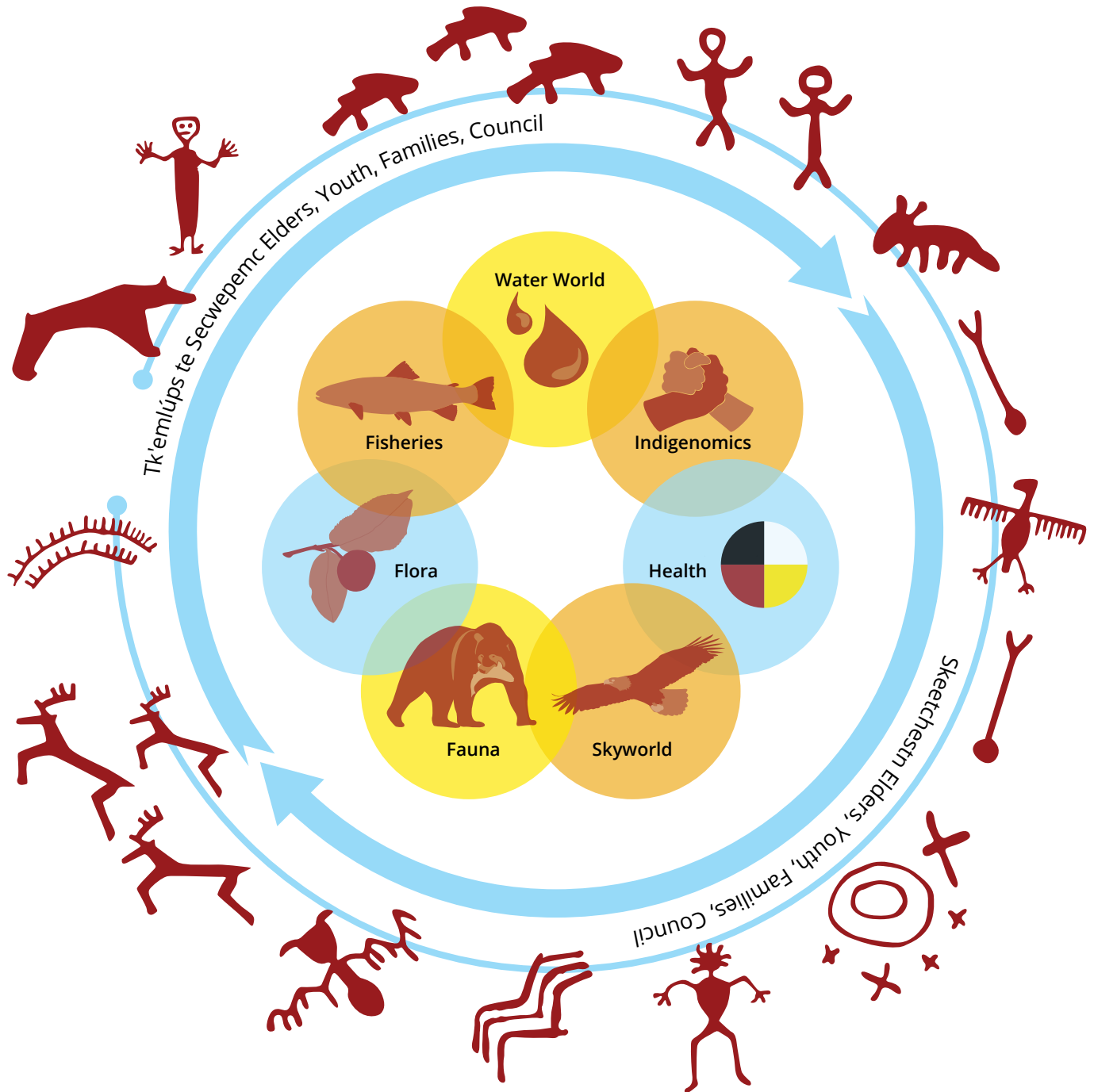
The Stk'emplúpsmc te Secwépmc Nation (SSN) is a governance group of the Secwépmc Nation, situated in our traditional territory around Kamloops Lake. Formalized in 2007, SSN represents the historic shared interests of the First Nation communities of Skeetchestn and Tk'emplúps te Secwépmc.

Our relationship of ownership and caretaking of Secwepemcul'ecw, our homeland, goes back since time immemorial (10,000+ years). That caretaking is based on living Secwépmc laws that guide us in regards to all that we do, with the land, in relationship with outsiders, boundaries of our lands and our reciprocal relationship with all living things.

SSN has constitutionally protected rights to participate in decision-making matters which could affect our rights. We maintain and develop our own Indigenous decision-making institutions whereby we determine priorities, as well as create strategies for the use of our territories and resources.



SSN Project Review Process



Given the current inadequacies of the Canadian and BC Environmental Assessment processes, SSN was required to develop its own project assessment process. This process was previously used to assess the proposed KGHM Ajax mine, and is now being used to assess the proposed Highland Valley Copper (HVC) Mine Life Extension Project.

Our objective is to facilitate informed decision-making by the SSN communities in a manner

which is consistent with our laws, traditions, and customs and assesses project impacts in a way that respects our knowledge and perspectives.

We have worked with our communities to appoint representatives from each family to step forward and deliberate on the best decision for the long-term well-being of our people and land. Our panel members have been involved throughout the process, from deliberation to final decision-making.

Walking On Two Legs Process

Balancing world-views and knowledge systems

Although the SSN Assessment Process is based on our laws and principles, its comprehensive nature is such that everyone benefits from the depth with which we study the benefits and impacts of the proposed mine extension and expansion.

The SSN Assessment Process is grounded in our oral histories, the 1910 Memorial to Sir Wilfrid Laurier, the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*, and the laws of BC and Canada. It is built on the principle of walking

on two legs - Secwépemc and western knowledge, with information provided both in oral and written format.

As stewards of the land, we are knowledgeable about how the land transforms from season to season, what to watch for and what is significantly affected by climate change impacts such as rising temperatures. We delve into the long-term intergenerational impacts as well as the pre-contact past to address the legacy of wrongs that our people have faced since Canada and British Columbia's foundation. We examined the aspects that are currently lost in the BC and Canadian environmental assessment and permitting processes and seek out information to describe the "intangible" impacts to spirit, culture and immeasurable impacts and our story.

The Significance Of This Project Assessment Process

Our comprehensive project assessment process is the best way that we can look after our families, our communities and our guests in Kamloops and the surrounding area.

As Secwépemc, we cannot look at our world in separate parts. The Canadian and BC environmental assessment processes are designed on a principle of compartmentalization whereby project impacts are segmented and individually assessed. Our world is not a series of independent "value components" where impacts can be assessed in isolation. An impact on one

part will impact all the parts of our world, as we are all interconnected.

We have intergenerational knowledge about this land that has been passed down. Teaching, practices and knowledge of how to care for the land in a way that it will continue to provide for us. The process is truly based on reciprocity of information exchange and giving voice to collective knowledge held within our families and communities.

Our nation's health depends on the health of our families and communities. The Elders, young people, and many families from our two communities have representatives at our panel table and have been involved throughout the process.



Significance Of The Land and Waters- Ctseltsaltnéws

The place that we call Ctseltsaltnéws, more commonly known as the Highland Valley, was once dominated by an extensive creek, lake and wetland system where Secwépemc and Nlaka'pamux ancestors regularly harvested resources from the rolling grasslands, open forests, and lush riparian valley bottom.

Since the construction of the HVC Mine in the 1960s, the original watercourses and landscapes have been dramatically altered, causing lakes to rescind, disrupting waterflow, and depleting aquifers. Pukaist Creek once outflowed to Twenty-Four Mile Lake and was connected to Big Divide Lake – a lake which is now rescinded below waste deposits at the mine site. Witches Brook flowed east through Quiltanton Lake, which has been drained and buried under HVC's Valley Pit, and south-east through Little Divide Lake which has also rescinded.

Helping Each Other To Be Great And Good

We are respectful hosts who are looking for equitable relationships that respect our rights and title as we honour the vision of our ancestors who signed the Memorial to Wilfrid Laurier, and to continue our traditional concepts around being the hosts in our lands, and the reciprocity that the host-guest relationship entails. In this memorial, our Chiefs clearly articulated, "With us when a person enters our house he becomes our guest, and we must treat him hospitably as long as he shows no hostile intentions. At the same time we expect him to return to us equal

Ctseltsaltnéws was and is a cultural landscape of spiritual work and power that was a unique and important meeting ground for ɫkwilc (Indigenous doctors from Secwépemc communities and neighbouring nations). The ɫkwilc who were active in the area continue to be remembered by name, and their descendants live in the Skeetchestn and Tkémlúps communities. The area they worked in included Quiltanton Lake, the area settlers named Witches Brook, and the area east of the Valley Pit near Bose Lake. The southeast part of this valley remains a sacred area for the Secwépemc people who practiced here, and whose descendants kept memories of this area alive.

There is frequent past and continuing use of the area between Tunkwa Lake and Logan Lake and the surrounding of Highland Valley by Secwépemc people for food gathering purposes, specifically harvesting sxúsem (soapberries). The area was also, and continues to be, used by SSN hunters, who hunt(ed) deer and moose in the area and fishers who had and continue to fish in several of the lakes in the Highland Valley area.

treatment for what he receives. "These people wish to be partners with us in our country. We must, therefore, be the same as brothers to them, and live as one family. We will share equally in everything half and half in land, water and timber, etc. What is ours will be theirs, and what is theirs will be ours. We will help each other to be great and good."

The grassroots work that SSN has undertaken by conducting our own project assessment process is an invaluable resource for the review of the Project through BC's environmental assessment process. In sharing about our process, it is our belief that much more common ground will be found between ourselves and our guests.