

2023 Annual Report



WSÁNEĆ
LEADERSHIP COUNCIL



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Message from the Director of Operations

ÍY SÇÁCEL SIÁM,

I am honoured to present the 2023 WŚÁNEĆ Leadership Council (WLC) AGM Report. This year we have made great progress in promoting the interests of WŚÁNEĆ.

Originally established under the Societies Act on May 7, 2018, the WLC emerged as a response to the ongoing infringements on Douglas Treaty rights. Currently comprised of Tsartlip and Tseycum communities, the WLC has become known for advancing the collective interests of WŚÁNEĆ.

As part of our mission to increase the recognition of, and respect for, WŚÁNEĆ Douglas Treaty rights and WŚÁNEĆ Aboriginal rights and title, we have made progress on several important initiatives this year.

Notable among the initiatives are progress at numerous discussion tables including those at the local government level and on the topic of RIRSD. In addition, we've celebrated several milestones with the establishment of the WŚÁNEĆ Land Trust Society; WŚÁNEĆ Referrals Department and the QENTOL, YEN / WŚÁNEĆ Marine Guardians.

Collaborative programs with GINPR, NMCAR, and numerous others continue to provide much needed cultural programming. All the while, our efforts are being guided by the voices of WŚÁNEĆ community during regular engagement sessions.

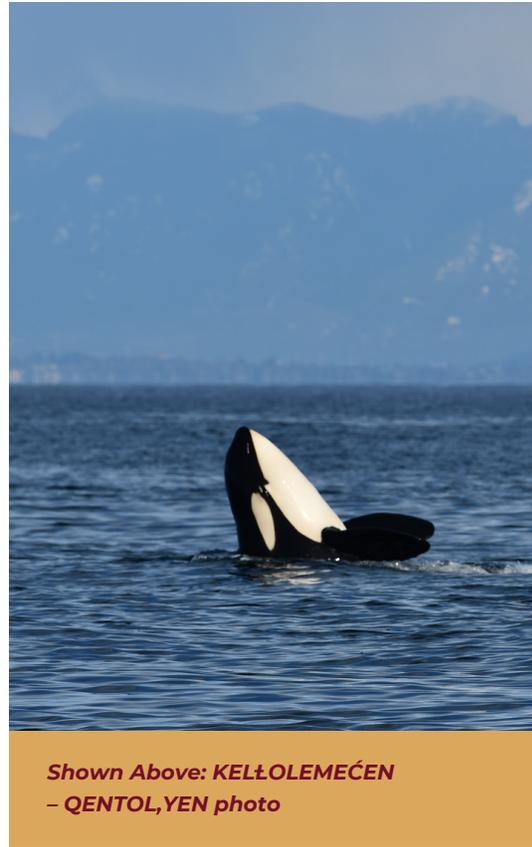
On behalf of the entire team, I express deep gratitude for the privilege of serving our community in 2023. Thank you for your ongoing support and trust in our endeavours. We look forward to the continued collaboration and progress.

Gordon Elliott,
Director of Operations,
WŚÁNEĆ Leadership Council



Executive Summary

This report captures a high-level snapshot of the W̱SÁNEĆ Leadership Council programs, project activity, and operations since the last AGM in December 2022. Since then, the WLC helped facilitate the return of significant land through the W̱SÁNEĆ Land Trust Society, engaged in marine and land use planning, appointed a Committee of W̱SÁNEĆ Cultural Workers to guide archaeological work in W̱SÁNEĆ territory, addressed concerns regarding construction in the Goldstream River area, continued several community rebuilding initiatives, examined ways to protect Douglas Treaty Rights, and took significant action to protect our animal relatives through the QENTOL, YEN Marine Guardians Program.



Reconciliation of Indigenous Rights and Self Determination Table (RIRSD)

In 2023 the WLC met with the tripartite table monthly. These meetings covered topics identified in the provincial and federal LOU's. This year we focused on the topics listed below.

■ Hunting Side Table

The WLC put forward a hunting position paper to the province that identified priority reconciliation topics. Access to land back for hunting is paramount.

Discussions with Provincial Parks are being scheduled for 2024.

The WLC recently received presentations from the Province on the Hunting Act Review Amendments and Wildlife Management in WSÁNEĆ territory; WLC is currently planning the work to be done at the provincial level.



Shown Above: Knowledge Holders and Youth during a Hunting Trip on Sidney Island

■ Fisheries



Shown Above: Restoration of clam gardens in WSÁNEĆ Territory

The WLC applied for funds for a fisheries research project intended to prepare WSÁNEĆ for fisheries management discussions with DFO. The WLC was denied the funds but continued to push DFO for other funding. DFO has recently found funds that permit WLC to start this work. WLC staff have discussed this opportunity with DFO and re-structured the initial project into phases, the first phase planned for January 2024, phase 2-4 contingent on a commitment to 2024-25 funding.

■ Transport Canada - Victoria Airport Authority

WLC completed negotiations and drafting of the Friendship Agreement with the Victoria Airport Authority (VAA) in early 2023. The WLC Board approved the draft Agreement and directed staff to move the agreement into Chief and Council review and approval processes. The WLC and VAA provided information and presentations to all four of the WSÁNEĆ Bands; two Bands

committed and meetings are planned with the other two. The WLC have applied continuous pressure to CIRNAC and Transport Canada regarding the land lease between VAA and the government of Canada. Transport Canada and CIRNAC are preparing to respond to the WLC on this topic at the February RIRSD meeting.

■ Framework Options

In 2023, WLC staff identified two main reasons the RIRSD table was unable to progress items in an efficient manner. WLC staff then created strategies to address both issues.

First, the RIRSD table lacks a comprehensive framework. WLC staff requested that the Provincial and Federal governments present on some of the Treaty implementation frameworks that other First Nations in BC were creating. Since then a presentation that provides an overview of different treaty implementation frameworks has been initiated.

Secondly, the separation of WSÁNEĆ into four Bands prevents progress on topics that involve the rights of all WSÁNEĆ. As such, the WLC has pressured the government for funds to bring the WSÁNEĆ Nation together to discuss Nationhood building and collaboration. Recently, funds have been provided for a forum in March 2024. Many presentations will be made, including a WLC presentation on alternative treaty implementation frameworks. Early planning for the forum has already begun.

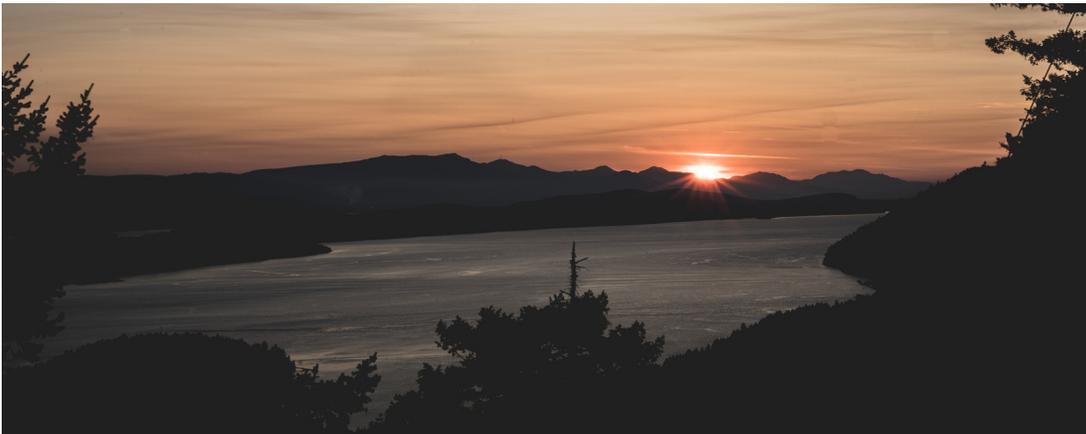


Shown Above:
WSÁNEĆ Leadership Council Logo

Local Government

■ CRD - Solid Waste Management - Hartland Landfill

The WLC (staff and the SWWG Committee) and the CRD met monthly in 2023 to discuss the creation of a benefit agreement in relation to the Hartland Landfill. These discussions have been slowed down by barriers in the Local Government Act that have forced WLC staff to seek legal input and advocate for change at the provincial level. The WLC CRD discussions have led to an almost completed draft agreement which will be presented to the WLC for feedback early 2024.



Shown Above: The Southern Gulf Islands

■ Government to Government

Based on a 2019 commitment, in 2022, the WLC drafted a WLC CRD MOU. The MOU was to cover government to government discussions. The CRD, at that time did not have the ability to provide capacity to agree to an MOU but continued to bring items to the WLC. In summer 2023 the CRD requested, and offered funds for a Government to Government discussion. With some advocacy from WLC, staff are reconsidering a WLC CRD MOU. With these commitments, staff are working on creating a local government position at the WLC that will help the WSÁNEĆ communities engage with the CRD and the WLC to create and implement an MOU and new governance framework.

■ District of Saanich

The WLC met with the District of Saanich four times in 2023. These meetings were to discuss the budget and priority items for MOU implementation. Considering that these meetings have taken place in the second half of 2023 we have moved to some planning for 2024 and scaled back on some of the items for 2023.

W̱SÁNEĆ Lands Trust Society

■ W̱SÁNEĆ Lands Trust Society Charitable Status

In 2021 the WLC established the W̱SÁNEĆ Land Trusts Society (WLTS), a not-for-profit organization initially formed to enable the return of 9.67-acre SISÇENEM (Halibut Island) to the W̱SÁNEĆ community. Although the WLTS is a separate legal entity, the WLC continues to provide in-kind donations of staff time and office space to support the important work of the WLTS in seeking and providing a legal mechanism for land to be returned into W̱SÁNEĆ care.

This year, with the support of WLC, the WLTS received “Charitable Status,” enabling it to accept additional donations of land and money. Furthermore, the WLTS became an approved recipient of Environment and Climate Change Canada’s “Ecological Gift Program” (EGP), which offers substantial tax benefits to land donors.

The WLTS has also recently launched a web page at www.supportlandback.com which offers an easy place for settlers

businesses, and others interested in supporting the WLTS mission to provide one-time or ongoing donations.

The WLC is now also supporting the WLTS to secure grant funding so it can hire staff to continue the good work. Upcoming projects will include a review of WLTS internal policies and practices, ensuring all work is deeply rooted in W̱SÁNEĆ SKÁLS and communities, while also meeting necessary western legal requirements.



Shown Above: Singers at TIKEL Land Back Ceremony

■ 45.7 acre Land Transfer to the WSÁNEĆ Lands Trust Society

The Berglund Family, through Brentwood Developments Ltd., announced the transfer of 45.7 acres of land in the core of ʔIKEL (Maber Flats) to the WLTS under the EGP. This was the first-ever donation of land in Canada to an Indigenous organization via the EGP. The property was owned by the Berglund Family since 1989 and was leased for farming purposes until late 2022. Then, the Berglunds, with the support of Habitat Acquisition Trust, approached the WLC. The WLC provided staff time and loans to the WLTS to facilitate the land transfer and continue to support the project through in-kind donations.

Over the coming years, ʔIKEL will be transformed by the WSÁNEĆ community to restore the land to its original state as an abundant wetland habitat. This restoration will encourage the preservation and transmission of cultural Indigenous knowledge by fostering traditional harvesting practices and offering educational initiatives that promote conservation. The donation underscores a collaborative effort between private landowners and the WSÁNEĆ community, addressing environmental concerns and upholding a harmonious approach to land stewardship. Pre-planning information gathering is currently underway at the site and WSÁNEĆ community will be brought into visioning and planning for the restoration in 2024.



Shown Above: Singers & Dancers at ʔIKEL Land Back Ceremony

■ Land Back Ceremony

The WSÁNEĆ community gathered together on August 18, 2023 for a ceremony to celebrate the return of the land at ʔIKEL. During the ceremony, the Berglund family and several WSÁNEĆ elders and community members offered words, and WSÁNEĆ drummers, dancers, and singers were featured. The ceremony included the presentation of gifts to the Berglund family, and a table of food for all to share. The ceremony was an opportunity to celebrate the transfer of ʔIKEL as an important act of reconciliation, while also acknowledging it as an action that supports community prosperity, food security, and climate justice.

WSÁNEĆ Marine and Land Use Planning

WLC has held several virtual engagement sessions. Two meetings in early April focused on “Governance and Stewardship Practices,” and two meetings in late April focused on the Douglas Treaty, specifically “Indigenous Rights and Title.” A focus group was held with the Archaeology Committee in July to get input on matters pertaining to WSÁNEĆ archaeology and cultural heritage.

WLC also solicited feedback from the community on the WLC’s draft goals for Ocean Current 1 – Community Health and Wellness, specifically on the topic of “Food Sovereignty and Security.” WLC asked the community for ideas to help discern areas that WLC’s current goals are lacking or ignoring, as well as feedback on what has been done right so far. Community members had the option to remain anonymous while answering.

Indigenous Management Board

The WLC continues to work together with the Quw'utsun Nation (Cowichan Tribes, Halalt First Nation, Lyackson First Nation, Penelakut Tribe and Stz'uminus First Nation), Malahat First Nation, Pauquachin First Nation, Snuneymuxw First Nation, and Tsawout First Nation as members of the Indigenous Management Board. While work at the IMB table is still in its early stages, it is beginning to take real shape as the Nations build a shared vision and plan for how to take up and take back our roles, responsibilities and authorities over our territories and waters, especially in relation to Parks Canada operations.

This year the WLC has stepped up its involvement in the IMB, by agreeing to establish, host, and support a Secretariat for that body. The Secretariat comprises two roles which will enhance collaboration and communications between the IMB Member Nations to ensure that the work of the IMB is properly informed by two way communications with Chiefs, Councils and Communities.



Shown Above: First Salmon Ceremony

As part of this approach, the WLC hosted an information session for W̱SÁNEĆ Community members in November to provide background information and hear feedback on the IMB's role and the work it is undertaking. The content of this session will be uploaded to the Community-only Webportal so W̱SÁNEĆ members can access the information provided in that session. Future sessions will be advertised on the WLC website and social media.

The IMB was established in 2019, in response to the Crown's unilateral establishment of the Gulf Island National Park Reserve in 2003 and their subsequent proposal for a National Marine Conservation Area Reserve in our territories prior to having any discussion with rights and title holders. The IMB is currently reviewing the GINPR arrangements, the proposed NMCAR and broader ocean and parks management. The IMB will then make recommendations to the IMB Member Nations about what could be done to achieve effective, holistic, First Nations led oceans and parks management within our territories.

Gulf Islands National Park Reserve

■ Renewed Traditional Land Management Activities on SḴTÁMEN

As part of an ongoing effort to restore the Island's native species, the WLC hosted several hunting trips to SḴTÁMEN. To combat the ecological problems which accompany settler-colonization and the privatization of land, Parks Canada asked the W̱SÁNEĆ community to address problems specific to SḴTÁMEN, most notably the invasive fallow deer which run rampant. The creation of a W̱SÁNEĆ hunting community to mitigate and control the population of invasive deer is a crucial and major part of the "Fur to Forest Initiative," a partnership between Parks Canada, British Columbia, and W̱SÁNEĆ and Hul'q'umi'num' Nations.



Shown Above: The Bow Hunting Course was very well attended

■ New Land-Based Whale Viewing Trail

On June 22, the community held a ceremony to officially recognize the opening of a new land-based whale-viewing trail on ƧƧƧƧƧƧƧƧ called ƧƧƧƧƧƧƧƧ. The creation of this new trail arises from over a year of collaboration between WLC, Tsawout First Nation, and the Gulf Islands National Park Reserve (GINPR). ƧƧƧƧƧƧƧƧ provides an opportunity for people to safely admire the beauty and majesty of ƧƧƧƧƧƧƧƧ and other whales in a way that is less disruptive to the whales than watching them from on the water. ƧƧƧƧƧƧƧƧ is now part of a large network of on-land, whale-viewing trails that extend to the west coast, connecting the ƧƧƧƧƧƧƧƧ community to several other First Nations.



Shown Above: New Land-Based Whale Viewing Trail

■ SƧƧƧƧƧƧƧƧ QƧƧƧƧƧƧƧƧ, EƧƧƧƧƧƧƧƧ SƧƧƧƧƧƧƧƧ Project

Throughout the year, the ƧƧƧƧƧƧƧƧ community has worked in tandem with Pauquachin First Nation, Parks Canada, British Columbia, and Islands Trust Conservancy to create deer-safe enclosures and fill them with bulbs of food and medicinal plants. The SƧƧƧƧƧƧƧƧ QƧƧƧƧƧƧƧƧ, EƧƧƧƧƧƧƧƧ SƧƧƧƧƧƧƧƧ (Taking Care of Sidney Island) project also continued its hunting program which provides a yearly period of exclusive hunting access to First Nations people.

This autumn, WLC offered an opportunity for ƧƧƧƧƧƧƧƧ Hunters to help recover meat meant to be shared with ƧƧƧƧƧƧƧƧ communities as part of the SƧƧƧƧƧƧƧƧ QƧƧƧƧƧƧƧƧ, EƧƧƧƧƧƧƧƧ SƧƧƧƧƧƧƧƧ project. This is an opportunity that specifically works in tandem with the eradication of invasive deer on SƧƧƧƧƧƧƧƧ (Sidney Island). Duties included working with Parks Canada staff to find, prepare, and field dress deer carcasses for butchering before the meat was distributed within the community. A two-day training session was provided by knowledge holders and First Nations Health Authority. Food, tents, cots, and sleeping bags were provided for the ten-day endeavor, and the WLC compensated members for their participation.

Archaeology Program

The WLC Archaeology Program was established in the summer of 2022. In November 2022 the WLC Board appointed a Committee of WSÁNEĆ Cultural Workers to guide archaeological work in WSÁNEĆ territory and ensure the development of responsible archaeological policies.

The appointed members were: Simon Smith Sr., Simon Smith Jr., Corey Joseph, James Jimmy, Carol Thomas, and Stephanie Joseph. In November 2023 the WLC Board appointed Barry Underwood, and formalized appointments of two trusted archaeologists that the Committee identified: Darcy Matthews and Nicole Smith.

Initiatives that the Archaeology Committee have led or been involved in over the past year include:

- Development of Archaeology Procedures and content for a Protocol Agreement to guide development on a Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) 89 acre property on East Saanich Road at the base of ŁÁU, WELNEW, a mountain that is sacred to WSÁNEĆ. Public Services Procurement Canada (PSPC) was mandated to oversee the construction of a new Centre for Plant Health. The WLC Protocol Agreement with PSPC enables monitoring of all excavation at the site, cultural acumen training for contractors, a ground-breaking ceremony, benefits including a cultural worker trailer and archaeological training, and cost recovery for staff time. The CFIA also committed to use WSÁNEĆ artwork in the architecture and building design
- Participation and providing guidance for the UVic-Tsawout 2023 Archaeological Field School at ȚEL,ŁĆĆE (Cordova Bay)
- CRD Mount Work Management Plan - site visits to the Summit trail, Durrance Lake and Killarney Lake to view proposed designated use (rock climbing) areas



Figure 5: from left to right, microblades: DcRu-15-8, 148, 120, 121.

Shown Above: Ancient WSÁNEĆ artifacts uncovered during work done for the CRD Wastewater Treatment Plant Project



Shown Above: WSÁNEĆ Community Members visit Mt. Work MP site

- CRD Southern Gulf Islands and Salt Spring Island Commissioners meeting at Poet's Cove on Pender Island regarding municipal level parks and W̱SÁNEĆ cultural values, monitors and interests

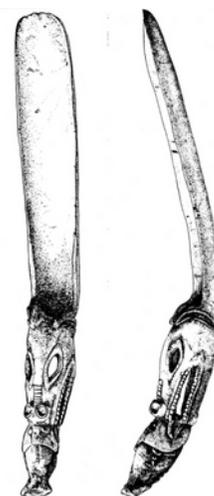


Shown Above: WLC meeting with CRD Southern Gulf Islands and Salt Spring Island Commissioners

- GINPR research project reviews, and collaborative work on a Code of Conduct for visitors and researchers, Erosion and Sea Level Rise monitoring initiatives, review of a prescribed burn proposal for S̱KÉKÉƧÁMEN (Eagle Islet), the ƧEKTEKSEN Whale Trail Project on Saturna Island, and preparation for the project to eradicate fallow deer on S̱ƧÁMEN (Sidney Island), and participation in Climate Change and Cultural Heritage workshops
- Providing monitors and guidance for the Canadian Coast Guard Aids to Navigation replacement project - with participation in an Archaeological Impact Assessment (AIA) and monitoring for tower and base replacement activities
- Implement provisions for Cultural Monitors in WLC agreements: District of Saanich (DOS), Victoria Airport Authority (VAA), Parks Canada, CFIA and PSPC Centre for Plant Health Project, others anticipated; also on private lands that are located in sensitive areas



Shown Above: Replica W̱SÁNEĆ artifacts gifted by Parks Canada to the Leadership Council.



Referrals Program

■ Provincial Proposed Road Work at Goldstream



Shown Above: WSÁNEĆ Community members gather for First Salmon Ceremony

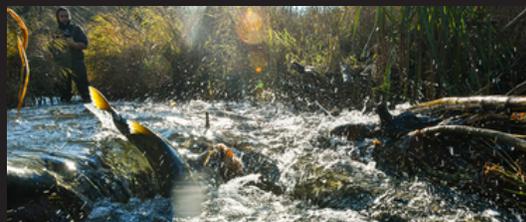
In 2022, the WLC Referrals Committee was made aware of a proposal from the provincial Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure (MOTI) to do roadwork on the Malahat Highway where it passes through Goldstream Park. MOTI plans to widen approximately 2.5 km of highway, install a median barrier, connect Goldstream trails to other nearby trails, and complete various pedestrian upgrades. Part of the highway project plan is to blast rock, install retaining wall structures, a cantilever structure that extends out over the river, and an enclosed drainage system with oil/water spill collection and separation devices near the Finlayson Arm Road intersection.

The Referrals Committee is concerned about how this project could impact fish and their habitats. Technical staff went on a site visit to Goldstream in mid-February to take photographs and notes about locations where the Province has proposed work. Referrals staff members have received and reviewed numerous technical reports related to this proposed project and have taken opportunities to engage WLC Technical Committees to get their input.

This Spring, WLC recommended that the WLC Board of Directors access funding to help recover costs for committee engagement and staff time to review technical documents. After confirming that obtaining these specific funds would not in any way indicate consent of the WSÁNEĆ community for the project to proceed, WLC entered into an agreement on May 22, 2023 to accept \$200,000 in engagement funding from MOTI.

This funding provides support for ongoing staff review of project reports, neutral third-party environmental consultant review of technical materials, and legal review of Right of Way materials.

In June, the WLC Board rejected a MOTI proposal to tender the project this summer and to drill in July. WLC is in the process of negotiating a contract for an Environmental Consultant to review contaminated soil and groundwater and other technical reports received to date.



*Shown Above: Salmon Run at Goldstream
- QENTOL, YEN photo*

■ Engagement Forum



*Shown Above:
Niagara
underpass*

On October 18, WLC used engagement funds to hold a forum for the community at the Saanich Fairgrounds to present information about the proposed barrier and road widening construction at Goldstream River. Presenters offered information on the logistics and technicalities behind MOTI's road widening project, and the floor was then opened to audience members to bring forward questions and flag concerns. The event was recorded so it could be available to WSÁNEĆ members and allow input from people who were unable to attend. While this October forum had high attendance, there was limited time for attendees to ask questions, so WLC will hold a second forum on January 10th, 2024 to receive additional input.

Legal advisors have said to be consistent in communicating that this project cuts through the most important salmon watershed in WSÁNEĆ territory and a WSÁNEĆ village site. Both of these things were guaranteed to be protected in the Douglas Treaties. Before MOTI start work on the project, they must ensure WSÁNEĆ constitutional treaty rights are meaningfully protected and continue to benefit the WSÁNEĆ.

■ Joint Utility Board (JUB) Sewage Treatment Plant Outfall Relocation

This project was delegated to WLC in March 2021. Since then the proposed outfall relocation point has changed three times. New Receiving Environment Monitoring Program and environmental assessment reports were produced, but involving WSÁNEĆ stewardship program personnel and knowledge holder input in the baseline research and project methodology has not occurred. In July WLC provided a workplan and budget that would enable full involvement in an additional year of baseline data collection as part of a preliminary accommodation package. The JUB have requested a meeting to discuss.

■ CRD Regional Parks Interim Strategic Plan 2022-2032

The Interim Strategic Plan was approved in July 2022 for a 1-year interim period to allow for further engagement with First Nations. In January 2023 WLC submitted a report on engagement outcomes that included priority topics and a workplan with budget to implement ongoing engagement. In July 2023 WLC sent a response to CRD Parks about the Interim Plan that was generally supportive, but flagged serious concerns about how CRD changes to the Strategic Plan enabled changes in regional park Management Plans on the Saanich Peninsula and the Gulf Islands. In the past plan, most Regional Parks were designated as Natural Areas where the focus was on maintaining biodiversity and habitat for wildlife; in the updated Strategic plan most of those areas are now designated as Natural Recreation Areas that enable more recreational activities.

The management plans for regional parks will need to be brought into alignment with the Strategic Plan. These across the board changes were made without consultation and accommodation on each Regional Park Management Plan - which should be required as each location holds different values. We learned from the CRD in late August that the Strategic Plan for 2022-2032 was approved and WLC concerns were not accommodated. CRD advised edits may be incorporated into future amendments. In October, the WLC Board directed staff to draft a strong response.



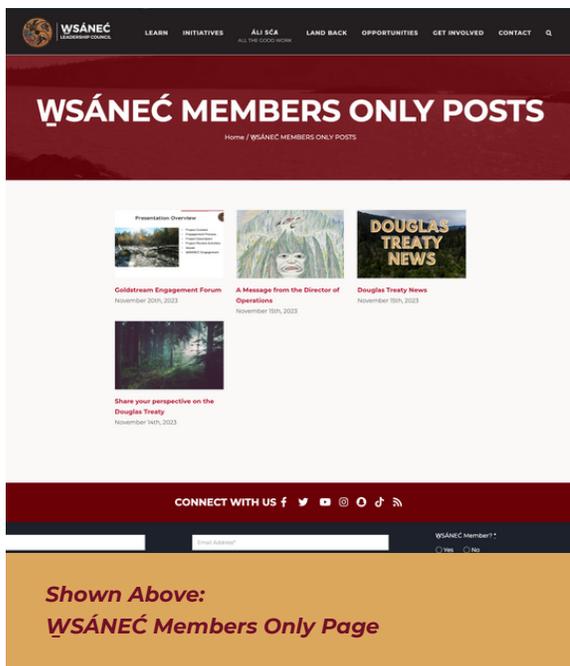
Shown Above: Local Wildlife – QENTOL, YEN

■ Park Management Plan (PMP) for Mount Work Regional Park

Over the past few years WLC have been participating in site visits as part of a review of a Draft Mount Work Management Plan for Mount Work Regional Park. We are in the process of putting in place a Mt. Work Management Plan Committee – drawing on the WLC Archaeology, Environment, Language and Technical Advisory Committees. We have shared a draft, a workplan, and budget with the CRD, and have been offered funding to enable participation in a planning process over the next 1.5 years. Part of the intent will be to explore a Traditional Use and Access Agreement as part of the planning process.

■ Nation Rebuilding Program

■ Community-Only Website Portal



Shown Above:
WSÁNEĆ Members Only Page

The WLC recently launched a community-only portal on the WLC website which offers secure access to private & sensitive, materials concerning the community at large. Members can use individual logins to access important information such as recordings of community meetings and engagement sessions, full-length copies of community agreements, and messages to leadership from community members. Signup is free. This feature is another way the WLC exercises its mandate to provide respectful and transparent communication with community members while promoting the interests of the WSÁNEĆ community.

■ Douglas Treaty Interviews

In response to community concerns, Director of Operations Gord Elliot wrote a letter calling for the community to unite to protect W̱SÁNEĆ people's inherent and Douglas Treaty rights. He wrote: "Over the last 171 years, the Douglas Treaties have not been adequately recognized by Governments and therefore have no policy or legislation to support their protection and implementation... It is now up to us to formally affirm W̱SÁNEĆ as the beneficiaries and descendants of the Douglas Treaties as a first step." WLC is taking action to ensure this affirmation. WLC interviewed nine W̱SÁNEĆ community members and asked them to discuss their perspectives regarding the Douglas Treaty. These interviews can be accessed on the website and social media channels.



■ Reviving S̱OLE Continues

The W̱SÁNEĆ Reef Net Fishing project continued this year, led by Co-coordinators Edna Ellsworth and Laila Morris of Tsartlip. The WLC established the W̱SÁNEĆ Youth Reef Net Program in 2020 to aid in cultural preservation and intergenerational knowledge transmission in order to revitalize W̱SÁNEĆ culture, while also providing employment opportunities for members of the community. The cohort of youths involved in the program since 2020 have dedicated months out of each year for researching, procuring materials, and collaborating with Elders to construct S̱OLE in ways that are as authentic as possible.



Shown Above: W̱SÁNEĆ Youth Reviving S̱OLE Technology

■ Collaboration to Reclaim Land Rights

This year, the WLC has celebrated the victories of BC First Nations who have reclaimed land-based rights in shared territories. Shared territories have been excluded from the rights enshrined in treaties governing land usage, and so, thousands of hectares of land in BC that carry the designation of shared or overlapping territory have fallen unchecked to development and extraction. Collaborative initiatives can protect shared and overlapping territories, including those traditionally used by W̱SÁNEĆ community members, and thus, Indigenous organizations - including the WLC — are working together to document traditional protocols and reclaim the rights and titles of shared and overlapping territories. To this end, the WLC is planning a conference to encourage further collaborative efforts to protect W̱SÁNEĆ land and other Indigenous territories. WLC sees this emergence of collaboration and collaborative governance as pivotal historic moments and looks forward to engaging the W̱SÁNEĆ community further.

■ A New Letter of Understanding

After two years of collaboration, the WLC and the Province of BC signed a new Letter of Understanding, a working arrangement which serves as an agreement to discuss policy changes that are necessary to effectively improve the issues most important to W̱SÁNEĆ community members.



Shown Above: W̱SÁNEĆ Leadership Council Team at the WLC's 2022 Open House

■ Increased Access to Sports and Recreation

To spread awareness of the importance of sport and celebrate W̱SÁNEĆ athletes, the WLC is rolling out several important initiatives, including a fundraising campaign for local youth to play sports, as well as profiling local community members who have shown leadership or excellence in sport.

■ A Message from the Director of Operations

WLC Director of Operations Gord Elliot published an article on the WLC website that actively addresses the concerns of community members regarding WLC discussions with Government on W̱SÁNEĆ people's inherent and Douglas Treaty rights. He began with a brief history of the North and South Saanich Douglas Treaties, then segued into the responsibilities W̱SÁNEĆ people have to ensure the reinstating of traditional cultural laws and relationships to management methods with the land and waters. The call for unity threaded throughout the piece highlights the autonomy of W̱SÁNEĆ people, along with the importance of self-determination and working to actively change the oppressive systems in place.

■ W̱SÁNEĆ Youth Council



*Shown Above:
Youth Reef Net Project*

The WLC recognizes the voices of our youth are unique and necessary, and to engage effectively, WLC needs a Youth Council Advisory Committee (YCAC) to help lead the way. The WLC envisions the YCAC as an opportunity for young people to have their say on important issues that affect their daily lives, while also providing career opportunities to practice leadership skills, work as a team, and develop conflict resolution and problem-solving skills. Committee members will provide recommendations on matters related to W̱SÁNEĆ youth and community, and honoraria will be provided. The WLC accepted nominations for the Youth Council via a TikTok and Instagram contest throughout the months of April and May.

■ Examining Legal Precedent

The WLC is exploring the application of the landmark legal victory by the Blueberry River First Nations (Blueberry) in *Yahey v. British Columbia*, 2021 BCSC 1287 (Yahey) to the W̱SÁNEĆ community's ability to enforce Douglas Treaty rights. The W̱SÁNEĆ community has experienced obstacles similar to those faced by Blueberry, and so the outcome of the Yahey case provides an opportunity for the WLC to reflect on the meaning, infringement, and implementation of the rights recognized and protected by the Douglas Treaties.

QENTOL, YEN Marine Guardians Program

■ Program's First Report



Shown Above: QENTOL, YEN Install a Hydrophone on Rum Island

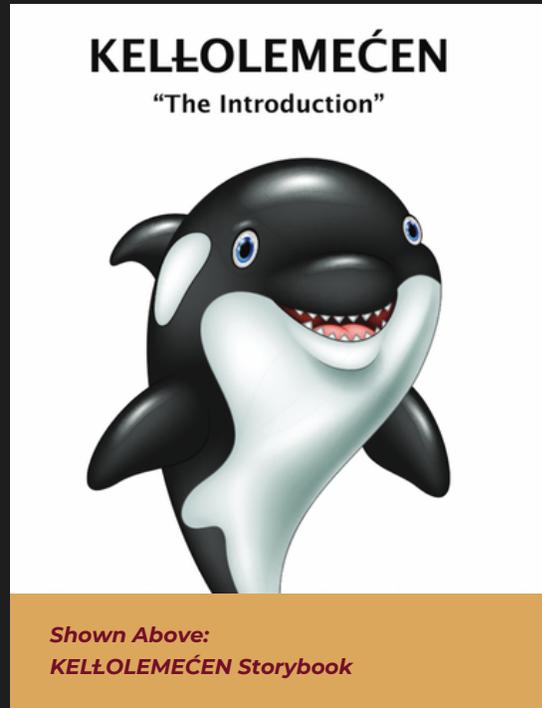
This year, the QENTOL, YEN / ƳSÁNEĆ Marine Guardians Program released its first report, a document providing detailed information gathered by the Program between November 2022 and March 2023. The report included water-quality analyses, information on the Goldstream Hatchery, and data from monitoring marine vessel activity. The report is available on qentolyen.com under the 2022-23 Report tab.

■ The IMPAC5 Conference

The QENTOL, YEN / ƳSÁNEĆ Marine Guardians team attended and presented at the International Marine Protected Areas Congress (IMPAC5), an international conference that brings together experts in ocean conservation and high-ranking government representatives to discuss, debate and take action on marine protected areas. This year's IMPAC5 conference, which was held from February 3-9, accepted the QENTOL, YEN's presentation, "New Beginning: QENTOL, YEN / ƳSÁNEĆ Marine Guardians."

■ KELLŐLEMEĆEN Storybook Published

The QENTOL, YEN / WŚÁNEĆ Marine Guardians have published a new limited-edition storybook KELLŐLEMEĆEN: The Introduction is part of the Marine Guardians' ongoing effort to restore the connection between KELLŐLEMEĆEN and WŚÁNEĆ people, a critical mission considering only 73 KELLŐLEMEĆEN remain. The story draws in readers of all ages with fun facts about KELLŐLEMEĆEN, also known as killer whales, presented in SENĆOŦEN and accompanied by vibrant illustrations and graphics. This book is intended to be the first in a series of storybooks by the Marine Guardians that focus on cultural stories centered around WŚÁNEĆ knowledge holders.



■ Rum Island Hydrophone Installation

The QENTOL, YEN / WŚÁNEĆ Marine Guardians, in collaboration with Simon Fraser University and BC Whales, have successfully installed a hydrophone on Rum Island. This project's focus is capturing critical data on the endangered KELLŐLEMEĆEN / Southern Resident killer whales. The hydrophone, operational around the clock, captures underwater sounds, including whale communications and marine traffic noise.

The data collected by the hydrophone will help in understanding the behavior and environment of the KELLŐLEMEĆEN. This information will enable the QENTOL, YEN to advocate for targeted conservation measures, such as implementing mandatory slowdown periods for marine traffic, and contribute to broader research efforts. By providing concrete evidence of the impacts of human activities on these whales, the data will support informed policy decisions and conservation strategies to protect the endangered KELLŐLEMEĆEN and their habitat.