



ANNUAL REPORT

Skeena Watershed Conservation Coalition

2020



WITH THE ANCESTORS

Jenny Quock - Tahltan - Klabona Keepers

Jenny is a founding member of the Klabona Keepers of the Tahltan Nation and mother to six children who have raised Jenny's grandkids to be protectors of land, people and culture. She stood on the road against Shell & Fortune Minerals, was arrested and told that if she blocked the road again she would not be able to go into the Sacred Headwaters despite it being her traditional territory where her family's traditional camp is located. She didn't back down. She was quick to feed family, friends and visitors from her walltent in Beauty Camp. Caribou stew, moose meat chow mein, roasted moose nose and veggies from Telegraph Creek. She was a formidable card player and took such good care of us whenever we visited. We love her so and miss her everyday.



Richard Wright - Gitxsan - Madii Lii

The first rafting expedition in the Upper Skeena that we did as an organization was under the mentorship of Richard. While he couldn't swim and hadn't whitewater rafted before, he still jumped in and taught us how to find and document cultural heritage infrastructure on the traditional territories of the Upper Skeena. He was instrumental to the Sacred Headwaters campaign, keeping LNG out of the Skeena estuary and protecting his own Wilp Luutkudziiwus territory from fossil fuel pipeline development. He supported more people & communities than we will ever know. He stood up against governments, industry and corporations for basic, human rights. He was a master strategist and a huge part of so many successes in BC - he was also a friend.

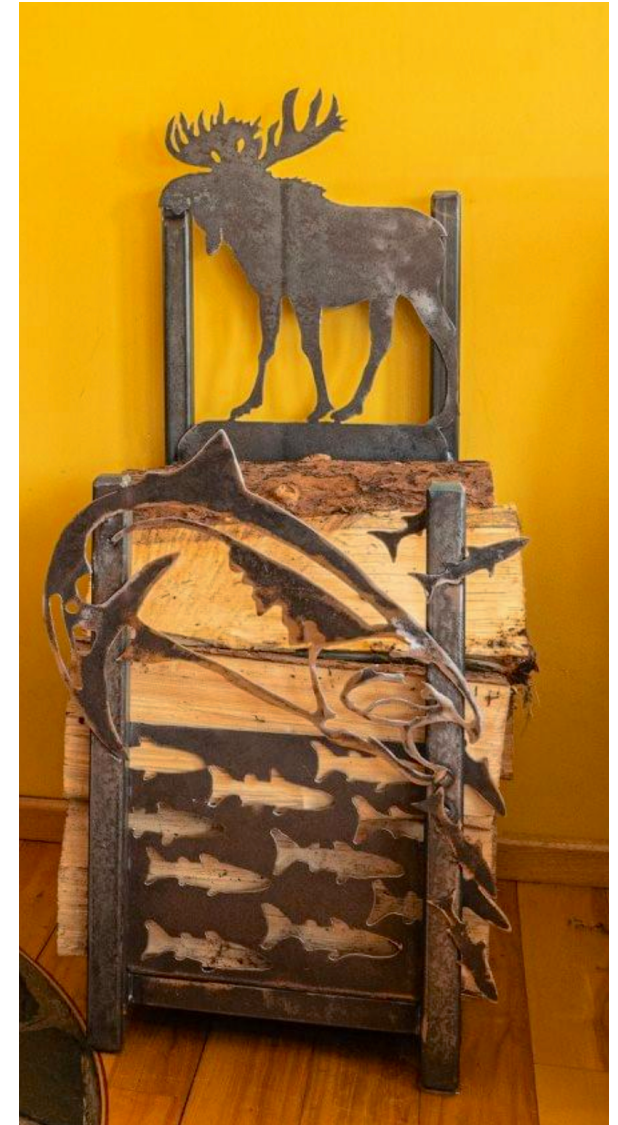


MISSION & VISION

"Cultivating a sustainable future from a sustainable environment rooted in our culture and a thriving wild salmon ecosystem."

The Skeena Watershed Conservation Coalition was founded in 2004 by a diverse group of people living and working in the Skeena River watershed. Our board of directors and membership reflects the broad interests of the people in this region. We are united in understanding that short term industrial development plans, even 50 year plans, will not benefit our region in the long run if they undermine the social and environmental fabric that holds the watershed and its communities together. Our range of activities all reflect this vision. They include:

- Informing our membership on proposed development plans that may compromise our vision of a sustainable regional economy.
- Working to develop long-term stewardship plans for the Skeena Watershed
- Organizing information meetings between regional/provincial governments, corporate developers and local communities
- Contributing to baseline research of wildlife, water quality, and cultural heritage resources in the Upper Skeena Watershed
- Developing sustainable employment opportunities that are compatible with the globally significant values of the region
- Providing educational programs for the region's children and youth (school programs and a summer conservation camp) to learn about the values within the Skeena watershed
- Sponsoring gatherings for stories, music, and art celebrating the Skeena Watershed



IT TAKES A VILLAGE

Board Members

Todd Stockner - Board Chair
Cathy Sims
Brad Wilson
Roy Henry Vickers
Harriet Hall
Wade Davis
Gene Allen

Chicken Farm

Tim Butement - Solar installation
Billy Gunanoot - Construction
Nate Combs - Skeena Valley Farm
Jolene Swain - Young Agrarians
John Stevenson - Ministry of Agriculture
Reginaldo Hasquett Maroquin -
Terry Brexson - Neighbour who rescued us when we got stuck!

Youth Chicken Wranglers: Hank, Bella, Riley, Owen, Grant, Silas, Sara, Michael & Moise
Tony Wells - Regeneration Farms

Staff

Shannon McPhail - Executive Director
Brian Huntington - Associate Director
Kathy Stockner - Office Manager
Kesia Nagata - Chickeneer
Jennifer Bulleid - Chickeneer
Firyal Mohammed - Community Economic Development
Jesse Stoeppler - Project Management

YOUTH ON WATER

Simon Stockner - Trip Leader
Travis Pete - Raft Guide
Shania Michel - Raft Guide
Kaleigh George - Raft Guide
Chris Zazula - Support Team
Nancy Hubbard - Support Team

Contractors

Kenny Rabnett - Secret Weapon
Tania Millen - Facilitator
Richard Wright - Wilp Luutkudziwus
Rhoda Quock - Klabona Keepers
Incite Media - Film/Media
Holly Arntzen - Up Your Watershed
Kevin Wright - Up Your Watershed
Leah Pipe - Data Visualization
Matt Lewis - Chicken Farm
Tyson Combs - Chicken Farm
Lennis Combs - Chicken Farm

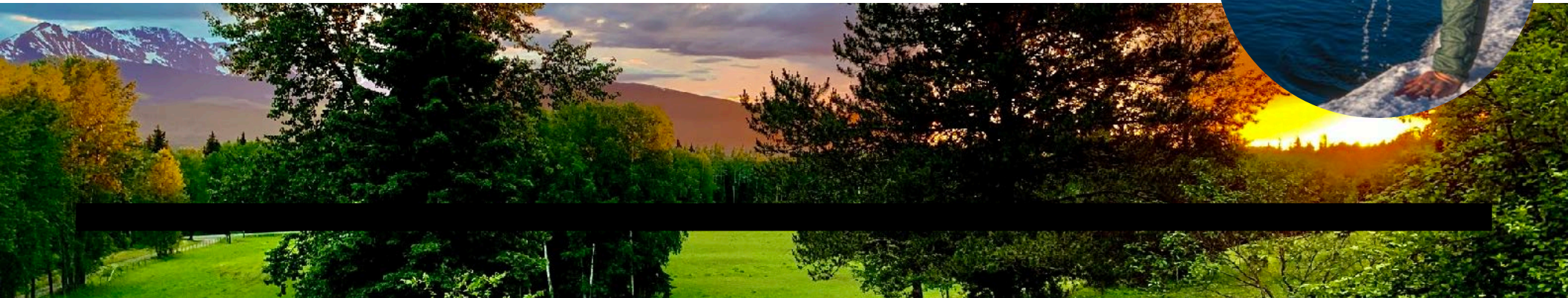
FORESTRY, CARBON, PEOPLE & SALMON

Shannon McPhail - Executive Director

It is with a heavy heart that I write this and do so in honour of those who have gone before us. SWCC, Jenny and Richard worked together for 15 years. The loss of those two great leaders is not just in our hearts but a great loss to the work as both Richard and Jenny were mentors, organizers and strategists. They held important relationships and knowledge. Their passing, and the passing of so many loved ones in 2020, reminds us that tomorrow is never promised, that mentorship is vital to the long-term viability of this work and that this work is being done to ensure the future of those who have yet to come - so that when our family members of future generations look back on us, they will know us as the ancestors who fought for and protected their future. Or put another way, to be the kind of ancestors that our future generations will be proud of.

When government and industry asked to meet with Richard or Jenny, they almost always hosted the meeting in their own camps on their own traditional territories. If the meetings were elsewhere, Richard would bring cases of canned and smoked salmon to share - actively demonstrating the bounty of an intact land and culture. Despite the fact that most of those representatives were there to trample Indigenous rights and title, both Jenny & Richard still fed them beautiful food from the land - leading by example with hospitality, grace, strength, honour and the power of place despite the disrespect, broken promises and relentless pressure. That sitting down together, in the very land and amongst the very people whose future is being discussed, is critical to achieving good outcomes. They helped teach many of us, including me, the importance of relationships and respect. It was their example that helped build the Talkin Logging Working Group (Woodlot owners, Indigenous leaders, mill operators, silviculture experts, fisheries consultants, civil servants, forest ecologists, business owners and farmers) to figure out solutions for better forest policy in the Kispiox Timber Supply Area on Gitksan Territories. It also helped shape the idea of the Forestry & Carbon Group (forest ecologists, botanists, registered professional foresters, conservationists and Indigenous leaders) to come together to figure out best practices for managing carbon as a part of healthy forests and forest policy. Food from the land was always on the table. It's why we doubled down on regenerative agriculture with chickens. All the groups we work with, no matter the diversity of opinions and perspectives, came up with a common solution - Indigenous led land use planning and genuinely implementing UNDRIP are key to dealing with the climate crisis & economic disparity. But right here in our own back yard, they are the critical pieces needed to move forward in our own relationships as communities both settler and Indigenous.

The participating scientists, businesses, communities, loggers, organizations and Indigenous leaders of the Upper Skeena listed in this report are proving that we (as a society) can absolutely build a culturally appropriate, climate smart economy while mentoring and empowering youth to carry this work forward in new and innovative ways - rooted in culture and a thriving wild salmon watershed. We just need the governments to catch up.





TREE - GENERATIVE CHICKEN

Kesia Nagata - Program Director

2019 was a transition year for SES, from a more general, educational approach to a tightly focused single project. In March, we got \$100,000 from the Vancouver Foundation to start exploring regenerative poultry production. This project ticked so many boxes for SES - sustainable, accessible, regenerative, community-entered, homegrown business development resulting in delicious and nutritious food(!), with renewable energy and low-impact building principles to boot. While we searched for land partners, researched building options, and waited for contractors and quotes, I wrapped up projects and MOUs with Hereditary Chiefs in Gitanyow and Gitwangak and the Gitxsan Government Commission, after two years of food-security and green energy exploration.

We hired Jennifer Bullied and spent some more time helping build the YOW shed before we started construction at Nate Comb's farm with Matt Lewis in July. We dug holes for poles, sourced local and recycled wood, used community labour and expertise, learned from and taught each other, and wore out our muscles and joints moving lumber and earth. Over the 6 months we worked with hand tools and whatever our underpowered, fuse-blowing generator could run to build a 1600ft² timber-framed, chicken palace out of standing dead cedar and local live-edge lumber, and a 10x10 tool shed designed like a traditional smokehouse. We worked with over a dozen different community members over the months on the banks of the Skeena with red tail hawks, ravens, coyotes and the occasional wolf keeping us company (and many, many dogs). Some weeks, we walked into the site with tools in our backpacks when the road got too muddy or icy to drive.

At the same time, we were learning about regenerative agriculture principles, chickens, ecosystems, and the complexities of a functional food system. Nate and I visited our sister farms in Minnesota to see what they look like in action, and speak in depth with our project partners about how to make our project meaningful, successful, and sustainable. We got really, really pumped about indigenous & community food sovereignty and what it means to be producing food for and with our communities. And we still are. We launch in June with the arrival of 1500 chicks!



YOUTH ON WATER

Brian Huntington - Associate Director & YOW Program Manager

At the height of last years eulachon run, we dragged our rafts over the spring time snow of the lower Skeena for the first river trip of the year. I pretended not to notice blistering outflow winds of a bright blue March afternoon blowing overhead. A few hours later, those winds pushed us upstream and then pushed us right off the river only half way through our highly spirited trip. And that was that. A few days later, the creepy crawly winds of Covid would threaten to blow all of us off the river for the entire summer. **Raft Guide Rule #2: Keep. It. Cool.**

So we did, we didn't make any rash decisions about what lay ahead. We stayed focused on what we could control and let go of what we couldn't. We hired a dedicated group of young guides who had a deep and shared appreciation for our rivers and above all else, a love for supporting other people to experience the river in a way that would positively affect their lives. With restrictions in place and our core schedule of youth programs postponed we decided to focus all our time and energy into guide training. Five days a week, from June through mid July, our guide team was on the water running rivers, taking certified courses, backing trailers down muddy roads and running through all sorts of decision making scenarios. In a typical year, one of our young guides would gain the experience and skills necessary to advance from a youth guide into a qualified and competent senior guide. Last year we had 3 of the 4 guides complete this maturation process all the way to trip leader status as a result of the extended training and increased mentorship they received in place of the normal guiding schedule.

Once our Covid Policies were cleared around mid July, the guide team was able to hit the river and respond to increasing number of community requests for river trips; providing families with a much needed recreational and restorative activity at a time when many programs were cancelled. Despite the daily dose of rain and grey skies, we were able to safely deliver river trips from July - September for 225 people totalling about 500 river days. We have life changing stories from each one of these trips to reinforce the value of our guiding operations and the role they play in our education, awareness and health. To our most capable and inspiring guide team and to everyone shared the water with in 2020... thank you for bringing the rivers to life.





COMMUNITY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Firyal Mohamed & Pansy Wright-Simms - Community Economic Development

Building on an identified need for a convenor/coordinator of community economic development (CED) related activity in the region, the CED Core Group hired a community economic developer, Firyal Mohamed, who began in September 2020.

The position is shared between the three organizations of the Core Group- SWCC, The Learning Shop and the Upper Skeena Development Centre (USDC), and housed at SWCC. The focus of the position has been to bring business development support to the Youth Works social enterprise of the Learning Shop, and to SWCC's Chicken Farm; as well to offer continued support to the development of the Upper Skeena Food Hub work of USDC. In addition, the position supports broader CED goals/activities in the area, including refining and implementing a CED framework previously developed within the Core Group. The position is supported by a cultural-counterpart, Pansy Wright-Simms, whose role is imagined as one of mutual support and learning with the CED position parallel in situating the CED position in a place-based, cultural context on Gitxsan territory; and, in building bridges of understanding between the values and priorities of CED-based work with the cultural wisdom of land and community stewardship in the Upper Skeena.



The Core Group has been transforming in its composition and priorities, having had several of the founding members transition into other work and due to the COVID 19 pandemic. CED is a way of trying to operationalize the Gitxsan principle of Gwalx Yee'lnswx which was explained to us as, "We have a received a full basket and it is our duty to pass a full basket on. This includes knowledge, both tangible and the intangible."

When Covid hit, we saw empty shelves in grocery stores and food security became a focus for many. Communities of the upper Skeena got together to do some planning for growing, preserving and helping get more community members growing their own food. More than 100 new gardens were planted in 2021!



SKEENA: A PLACE CALLED LOVE

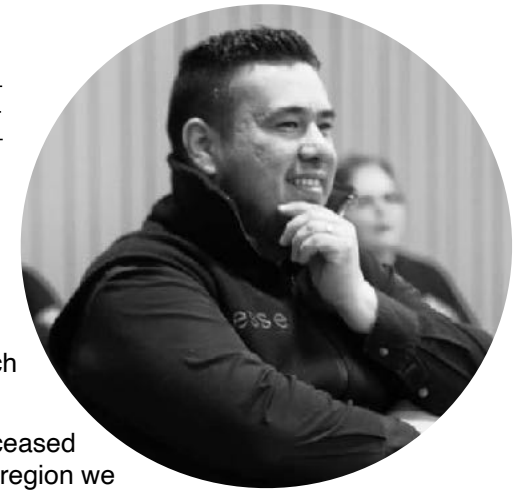
Jesse Stoeppler - Program Management

SWCC reached out to me in the late fall of 2019, on a professional basis we shared a lot of views and commonalities which paved the way for collaboration ...and I felt immediately at home.

The past allowed me to build a background in Project management and our rich Gitxsan and Wet'suwet'en culture never ceased to provide arising challenges for applications. Something all of us experience, regardless the origin of our heritage, in this region we call home.

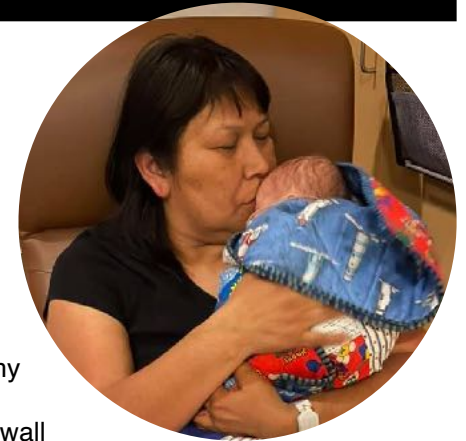
My employment with SWCC was based on the "Empowered Energy Solutions" project but like many other programs 2020 was and still is shadowed by a global pandemic. As humans and people of the great north this triggered various reactions, comparable to muscle memory we are guided by tradition, not short to adapt to our environment and the scope of my work. Staff at SWCC by fate was ahead of the curve, focused on Community Economic Development, Food Security, sustainable Agriculture and Social Development, all while encompassing a strong sense of sustainability, cultural respect to Hereditary leadership and community.

2020 truly underlined the course of our direction and I am excited to watch the progress. The Office of the Wet'suwet'en trusted SWCC as an organization to partake actively in Title & Rights discussions in Regional Engagement Meetings and as a member of the Core Advisory Council in collaboration with the provincial and federal government of Canada as we know it. The outpour of support from communities, Hereditary leadership, local MLA's and MP's is living testament of the importance in these matters.



SACRED HEADWATERS

Rhoda Quock - Spokesperson, Klabona Keepers



The Sacred Headwaters is the birthplace of three of Canada's greatest wild salmon watersheds. More importantly, this is my home. It's where my parents, who have both passed on, made Beauty Camp a home at the base of Mt Klappan. My mom, Jenny Quock, and my aunt, Bertha Louie fed countless family, friends, RCMP, government and industry officials from their wall tents and campfire kitchens.

The Stikine, Skeena and Nass rivers are all born from this special place - The Klappan, aka - the Sacred Headwaters. An Indigenous Protected Conservation Area (IPCA) was preapproved by the federal and provincial governments in 2019 after more than a decade of court cases, blockades, meetings, roads washing out, rallies, scientific reports, thousands of letters, countless community meetings and tens of thousands of signatures for the protection of this incredible place! We remember all those who dedicated so much to make this happen. The IPCA is not yet implemented and we won't stop until it is.

This past year, I was able to attend virtual or conference call meetings with the Klappan Management Board and the Tahltan Central Council's land use planning team to keep advancing the IPCA designation. We, the Klabona Keepers are about to complete our first feature length film in partnership with Tamo Campos of Beyond Boarding. The film tells our story - we hope it will help others understand just how much it takes to stand up against the biggest corporations on the planet. We also had to stand against the government and remind them that we have constitutionally protected Indigenous rights and title - even though our laws are older than Canada. We weren't able to build the monument atop Mt Klappan in 2020 due to more and more loss in my community and COVID shutting things down. Hopefully we will begin construction in July of 2021. These are uncertain times.

The youth mentorship work was postponed as youth couldn't gather while COVID numbers were so high and travel was restricted. We did redirect some of those funds to support a mapping workshop for youth both in Tahltan territory and Gitksan territory and are seeing some of those skills being used in protection campaigns and land use planning in other watersheds born from the Klappan.

2020 was a difficult year for me and my family as my mother, Jenny Quock passed in August. We miss her so much and I know she is with the ancestors including my father, Robert Jakesta. This is the land of my ancestors, of my parents, of me, of my children and the generations unborn.

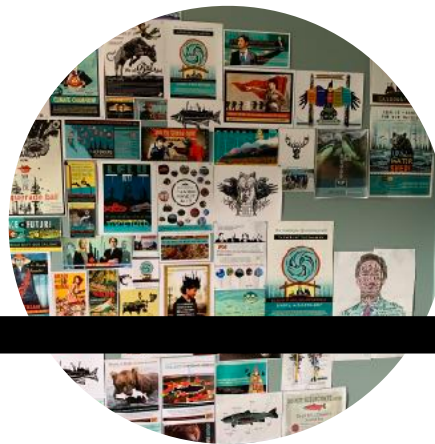


KATHY STOCKNER

Office Mom

When the pandemic hit last March I scaled back going to the office, along with everyone else. However, unlike my colleagues, much of my work requires me to physically be there. Although I can do some computer work from home, all of my SWCC files and bookkeeping are on my desktop computer at the office, so that's where I need to be to get most of my work done ... not to mention hands-on tasks like collecting the mail and writing cheques.

A year later, I've settled into a routine of working at the office three days a week, Tuesday to Thursday, and I usually have the place to myself. Being kind of an introvert, I'm okay with this, but I also do miss the hubbub of amiable chatter, Shannon's energy and bursts of laughter, taking turns at the microwave, and having impromptu discussions around the conference table. The bonus is that we now make a point of meeting weekly via Zoom on Mondays, which we all join from home. These two-hour sessions are a window into each other's worlds, both work-related and personal. From these Zoom meetings I have learned more about the work the others are doing than I would otherwise be aware of, which has given me a renewed respect for everyone on the crew, as there is a lot of pretty great work getting done. And the bits of creative fun we inject into the Zoom meetings are clearly enjoyed by all and seem to make us feel closer, even though we mostly work apart. Pretty cool





Pansy-Wright Simms: Wilp Luutkudziwus



Coming together on our Laxyip. Unity and showing expressions of love and respect. Our family/wilp members come together to honour and celebrate our lives and connections to one another. Many more opportunities to follow. We are decedents of this land and we are striving to maintain our place in this world. Living and breathing the fresh air, we are reliant on all the food that sustains is, the clean water, salmon, moose, plants, medicines, berries. Our basket is full. Our children are watching us always. Let us continue to model love, respect, compassion and honour all that sustains us....that includes one another.



SHOW ME THE MONEY

Income/Revenue	
Grants (foundation, corporate, government & other NGO's)	\$735,792
Donations (individual & corporate)	\$4,331
Fundraising (merchandise, fee-for-service, etc.)	\$26,710
Total 2019 Income	\$766,833

Expenses	Staff Payroll	
Admin or Operations	\$46,262	\$35,136
Community Building/CED	\$44,465	\$74,461
Sacred Headwaters	\$84,221	\$36,977
Skeena Energy Solutions	\$135,633	\$66,037
Upper Skeena	\$124,224	\$69,611
Youth on Water	\$43,723	\$64,531
Non Charitable/General Purpose	\$62,587	\$4,346
Skeena Projects	\$637	\$270
Total 2019 Expenses	\$541,752	\$351,369
Grand Total	\$893,121	