

HOW CAN CITIZENS PARTICIPATE IN THE RECOVERY OF THE FRASER RIVER SOCKEYE?

Presentation by Michelle Edwards
August 18 2010

I would like to focus on working together with all parties to make certain that the fish are respected for their purpose in life. They are here to feed Mother Earth, the wildlife, and the people. They should not be used in the courts as a right for anyone, as conservation is our first right.

I have heard that in my ancestors past they had people who watched as the fish swam by, and when they seen that enough fish had gone by, to spawn and feed the people upstream they would then call the people to fish. This was respect, something that would have been entrenched in our way of life. There would have been no thought to go ahead of this man. You have to remember back then we had populations of 50000 or more just in our nation, so to show this kind of control over people, we would have respected this person and their position in the tribes. Every nation would have done the same type of management practice along the river, which showed that we worked together to make certain our fish population remained healthy and abundant for years to come. To work together like this we would have had to have the utmost respect for the salmon, the river and Mother Earth.

It is the salmon that we all claim we have a right to that have the hardest journey ahead of them and they do it by staying committed to their journey home and all obstacles that impede them. They do it because their sole purpose in their life is to get back to their spawning grounds. All of us are only a small part in their journey home but their existence in our life has made us who we are today and we should all be forever grateful to them.

The dream of living with the salmon and healing the relations between our species has motivated hundreds of initiatives by citizens groups and entrepreneurs throughout the fish's range. It has spawned watershed councils, fish rearing projects, bronze sculptures and led to otherwise inactive individuals to spend Saturdays pulling brush and planting trees. It has moved some fishermen to handle their fish like gifts instead of cargo and fish buyers to value the difference between a factory fish and a wild salmon.

These broad based efforts offer the most hope that humans can again show respect for the salmon in the fabric of our way of life, and work-out mutually beneficial terms for sharing the Fraser River with them. By doing so we can begin to develop the principles for cooperation with one another and the rest of creation that will allow not only salmon but the rest of the natural world to make way in the world on an even and equal scale.

Take only what you need and let the rest grow. What if the wild salmon no longer return? I cannot say whether we have the strength necessary to bear this impending loss.

The salmon, the tree, and even the falls echo within if we become still and listen. Once you have heard, take only what you need and let the rest go.

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