

VISIONS CONFERENCE UPDATE:

The conference objective this year was to support First Nations in working together to prepare for greater involvement in fisheries management and aquatic eco-systems in the Fraser Basin

The Fraser River Aboriginal Fisheries Secretariat held the Visions in Shared Management fisheries conference in the heart of the Nicola Valley on March 29, 30, and 31, 2006. The Conference brought together Fraser First Nations and others to examine current issues including the Wild Salmon Policy implementation, Pacific Fisheries Reform, and Integrated Fisheries Management Planning all within the context and spirit of collaboration and integration.

Participants were encouraged to assess the current climate, explore common opportunities, and recommend next steps for moving forward. Visions was an exciting opportunity for those wanting to learn more about topical issues facing the Fraser Basin and the inter-relationship between First Nations and government in the BC fishery.

Sockeye was at the heart of discussions with ongoing conservation setting and planned benchmarks that Fraser First Nations would like set to get the fish back to inland spawning beds and fisheries. It was heartening to see acknowledgement and awareness of sockeye escapements plans and forecasts. First Nations along the Fraser are aware that this season will not be an easy one and formal processes, structures and funding sources need to be implemented to build the sockeye resource through the Wild Salmon Policy and other initiatives.

Esther Shackelly of Nooaitch commented on the final day that there needs to be focus on the grass roots people in our communities to see what their opinions and views are on the food, social and ceremonial dialogue. This could be done in conjunction with the Conservation Management Plans through a Tier one process. There is a basis for a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to keep the momentum going.

The leadership see the need for an intertribal fisheries agreement, as George Saddleman, NTA Chair stated, the

Stat'imx Tribal Council is the keeper of the original Inter-Tribal Fisheries Agreement. This could be the basis to start partnerships. George asked the Fraser First Nations at the Visions Conference, "How do we maintain focus, and as leaders gain momentum? When the leadership can see the momentum, the leadership can move and do wonderful things!" George added, "It is when we get into principles – then we end up with roadblocks, and intertribal squabbles. Regulation and policy does not take in our traditional beliefs and instructions..."

All in all, the Visions Conference can be summed up as a success. The 2006 Visions Report will be out soon. Stay tuned on fisheries issues, the season is just beginning!

Deloris Charters

MEETINGS:

FRASER FIRST NATION PROTOCOL MEETING – April 18, 2006, 9:00 am, 51st Hall, Musqueam, B.C. – The Tsawwassen First Nation and Musqueam Indian Band invite all Fraser First Nations to a meeting to initiate discussion regarding DFO issuance of fishing licenses in the Fraser River to First Nations outside the Fraser River area. A registration form is available, by contacting the Musqueam Indian Band at 604-263-3261. **For further info, contact Tony Jacobs, Fisheries Manager, Tsawwassen First Nation at 604-943-2112 / cell: 604-512-6003 OR Michele Point, Fisheries Commissioner, Musqueam Indian Band at 604-263-3261.**

BRITISH COLUMBIA ABORIGINAL FISHERIES COMMISSION (BCAFC) SPECIAL ASSEMBLY – April 20, 2006, Musqueam BC at the Musqueam Hall on 51st. **For information contact Jen at the BCAFC office: 604-913-9061 or email: jthomas@bcafc.org**

UPPER FRASER FISHERIES CONSERVATION ALLIANCE MEETING - April 21, 2006, Quesnel, B.C. **For info, contact Marcel Shephert at 250-964-0337.**