

An Intertribal Fisheries Treaty of Mutual Support

By Mike Staley, FRAFS Senior Biologist

First Nations gathered last week in Lillooet to review and re-energize efforts to implement an intertribal treaty on fisheries for the Fraser watershed. There were nearly 100 participants from First Nations throughout the watershed, but primarily in the mid- and upper areas.

All there that spoke agreed that First Nations would be well served by working together through an instrument like the treaty. The meeting took place in the same location as the signing of the 1989 document.

Many of the issues that brought First Nations together to develop and sign the treaty some 15 years ago are still present today.

There is a commitment from those present to pursue implementation of the treaty and to try to bring it up to date, to address current realities.

Work will be underway to bring together a working group composed of senior political leaders from the major tribal groups in the Fraser. Unfortunately, there were not very many representatives from the lower river, although those were present expressed interest and willingness to work together to try and find solutions to common problems.

One of the challenges will be how to find a place for the many independent bands (apart from major tribal groupings) for whom fisheries is a major issue.

Dr. David Levy presented a status report on Fraser salmon. The current picture is grim for many stocks, such as early and late Stuart and Cultus. Salmon stocks are facing significant challenges from climate change. Also, the mountain pine beetle epidemic will have far-reaching implications for the future of the salmon resource in the Fraser watershed.

The need has never been greater for some sort of overarching organization of First Nations on the Fraser River, which would bring to bear their inherent rights and responsibilities together with their unique perspectives and knowledge to address the current and future problems facing salmon, and the people that depend on them, in the Fraser watershed.

It is clear to this observer that the road to the implementation of an intertribal treaty, such as the one signed in 1989, will require a great deal of focused energy, together with a high degree of statesmanship and compromise. The concerns and issues facing Fraser First Nations have so many common elements and are so pressing that the time appears right to take another major step in the journey that was started 15 years ago.

The Fraser River Aboriginal Fisheries Secretariat should stand ready to assist and support in any way possible this journey ahead.

UPCOMING MEETINGS:

**WED & THURS, NOVEMBER 28 & 29:
Intertribal Treaty Meeting, Kamloops**

**TUESDAY, DECEMBER 11:
Fraser Watershed Joint Technical
Committee Meeting
Ramada Plaza, Abbotsford**

Please note that the Watershed Talk has now returned to its bi-weekly schedule, and we are looking for submissions from communities, fisheries organizations, etc. We're interested in community & project stories; historical, traditional & cultural stories; information about threats to fish; policy & legal issues; upcoming events; information about fish habitat; announcements, celebrations, workshops, public meetings, open houses; and anything else pertaining to fisheries that you think might be of interest to the Watershed Talk readership.

FSWP 2008 Request for Proposals

The Fraser Salmon and Watersheds Program is pleased to release its 2008 Request for Proposals. FSWP seeks to develop a 2008 workplan based on approximately \$4 million in available funding directed to projects in four program areas:

- Education and engagement
- Integrated planning and governance
- Habitat and water restoration and stewardship
- Improved information / approaches for sustainable integrated fisheries management

For more information see
www.thinksalmon.com

The Watershed Talk is available for
download at www.frafs.ca
Next issue: Friday, November 9