

Rafters welcomed with drums and songs

Naturalists host supper

KIM NORTH

The Rivershed Society of BC's Sustainable Living Leadership Program (SLLP) group rafted into Lillooet in the late afternoon of Saturday, Aug. 18 and was welcomed by Lemy7a at the Bridge River Fishing Rocks, and by

Christine Jack, drumming a welcome song, and the Lillooet Naturalist Society at the pull-out at Cayoosh Creek Campground.

Nine young people from across B.C. were taking part in the annual 27-day trip down the length of the Fraser River to learn more about the river and its beauty, while coming up with solutions to address the issues impacting the river's health.

The Lillooet Naturalist

Society hosted the supper, which featured baked salmon prepared from wild salmon caught locally, and salads and dishes prepared with local fruit and vegetables. More than 60 people attended the supper, which included St'at'imc and other aboriginal community members from other regions on the Fraser River, Naturalist members, and representatives from Fraser Watershed Initiative, Wilberforce Foundation (funder), Canadian Parks and Wilderness, West Coast Environmental Law, and of course, Fin Donnelly and the SLLP youth and facilitators.

Candice Jack was a SLLP participant a few years ago, and this year was hired as a facilitator on the raft to share her passion and knowledge of the river with the 2018 participants. It was great to see her thriving on the river.

On Sunday, 40 people enjoyed a day on the river, floating, watching the scenery go by, having good conversations, and riding a few small rapids between Lillooet and the Stein River, where another awesome supper was served by Fraser River Rafts.



Rafters ready to embark on the next step of their journey down the Fraser.

Photo: Vivian Birch-Jones.

Keely Weget-Whitney, also a past SLLP participant, swam the Fraser River from Lillooet to Lytton last year, along with the rafts to bring awareness to the river. She swam two days this year from Lillooet to Boston Bar. Rivershed Society founder and MP Fin Donnelly and Brandi Bee also jumped in and swam for short portions of the trip this year, and Kevin Aitken was the safety kayaker for the day.

Look out for the short video made of Keely's 2017 swim called "For the Love of Salmon." It has been winning awards at film festivals this

year and will be coming to Lillooet soon.

The Rivershed Society of BC is spearheading a new program that is being led by local communities and is called the Fraser Watershed Initiative. The goal is to provide some protections and restoration works throughout the entire Fraser River watershed - a lofty goal with a lot of work to be done over the next 10 to 20 years.

John Redan, a past SLLP participant and an environmental and fisheries technician at Splitrock Environmental, and land-use advisor for the Sekw'el'was

community, is assisting with the mapping for this project, and Aboriginal leaders from the Williams Lake and Lytton areas are assisting in facilitating the process.

Initial discussion maps and information on the project will be available over the next few months, and a Restoration Conference is being planned for Kamloops for Nov. 14-15.

More information to follow soon.

If you are interested in learning more about this initiative please contact Kim North, board member of the Rivershed Society of BC.



Despite the smoke from B.C.'s raging wildfires, participants enjoyed an outdoor dinner of wild salmon caught locally.
Photo: Kim North