



Coastal Stewardship Network Annual Gathering
Nuxalkulmc Territory – May 6-10, 2024



Contents

OVERVIEW 3

 Summary 3

 Purpose of the CSN Annual Gathering 4

AGENDA 5

ACTIVITIES 6

 Welcome Ceremony and Dinner – Nuxalk Hall 6

 Day 1: Petroglyphs and Cedar Weaving Class 7

 Day 2: Cultural Trip: Big Cedar and Hot Springs 8

 Day 3: Nusq’lst Village and Guardians/Rangers Pilot Project 9

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS 10



OVERVIEW

Summary

The 2024 Coastal Stewardship Network Annual Gathering was the first ever hosted in Nuxalkulmc (Nuxalk Homelands), Bella Coola, bringing Guardians from all eight CFN member Nations together to share ideas and discuss their stewardship work.

An opening feast and ceremony at Nuxalk Hall, facilitated by Councillor Iris Siwallace, welcomed all the visiting Guardians during an evening of dancing, songs and speeches from Stataitmc (Nation leaders). It was the perfect way to get the Guardians ready for the week's events, which featured a packed agenda of hands-on activities, including several group field trips to learn about the region's cultural and natural heritage.

The next morning began with a hike guided by Iris Siwallace and Chris Nelson to see the 14,000-year-old petroglyphs (rock carvings), accompanied by enlightening discussions and stories about the history of the Nuxalkmc people throughout the region. After lunch, eight wonderful (and very patient!) Nuxalk women joined the Guardians to lead them through a cedar weaving class, giving everyone a chance to bond and get to know each other better.

On Wednesday, Guardians gathered together for a boat trip to visit two very important cultural sites—Lhkw' ti tsatsawlhp (the Big Cedar tree) and x7piixm (Tallheo Hot Springs)—a great setting for lively discussions about the importance of protecting and preserving both the natural and cultural heritage.

The massive tree's 5-metre diameter was wide enough for 11 Guardians (representing eight different Nations) to stand around its base and touch with outstretched hands—recorded in an [incredible video](#) that has (so far) received 10 million views on Facebook, with thousands of likes, comments and other engagements from CFN's social media followers from around the world!



The final full day of the gathering began with a visit to the Nusq'lst village site, led by Nuskmata and her son, Orden Mack. Afterwards, the Guardians took a drive up the valley to meet at Fisheries Pool Campground, where the Nuxalk and Kitsoo Xai'xais Guardians, along with BC Parks representatives Steve Hodgson, Andrew Spear and Felicia Harris (who was also a Guardian at one time), discussed their innovative pilot project to share compliance and enforcement responsibilities between Guardians and Park Rangers. The session allowed Guardians from

other Nations to ask questions and learn about this first-of-its-kind collaborative project. To wrap up the day, the group returned to Nusq'lst for a campfire discussion on compliance, enforcement, and other important issues related to the Guardians' work.

Purpose of the CSN Annual Gathering

Since 2008, the Coastal Stewardship Network (CSN), a program of Coastal First Nations-Great Bear Initiative (CFN-GBI), has facilitated the CSN Annual Gathering to bring Guardians and other stewardship staff together to discuss regional stewardship efforts on the North and Central Coast and Haida Gwaii.

The gatherings feature a unique mix of hands-on cultural activities and highly practical field training, such as environmental monitoring techniques or compliance and enforcement training. These gatherings provide an excellent opportunity for Guardians to make new connections and renew old ones, and share updates on stewardship priorities, as well as accomplishments and challenges over the past year. The gatherings also involve participation from community Elders and knowledge keepers, who share knowledge and wisdom with all participants.

These gatherings are an essential part of the ongoing networking support that CSN provides for Guardians of all CFN-GBI member Nations—the Wuikinuxv, Heiltsuk, Kitasoo Xai'xais, Nuxalk, Gitga'at, Gitxa'la, Metlakatla, Old Massett, Skidegate and Council of the Haida Nation.



AGENDA

May 6: Welcome Ceremony and Dinner

- Welcome speech from Stataitmc (Nuxalk leadership) and land acknowledgements
- Dinner, dancing and songs

May 7: Day One Activities

- Visit the 14,000-year-old petroglyphs and hear stories of the Nuxalkmc people.
- Learning activity with Nuxalk instructors: Cedar weaving class
- Evening: Barter Night

May 8: Day Two Activities

- All-day boat ride to see the Big Cedar and Tallheo Hot Springs (x7piixm)
 - *Discussion:* Protecting both natural and cultural heritage.

May 9: Day Three Activities

- Visit to the Nusq'lst village site
- Compliance & Enforcement with the Nuxalk/Kitasoo Xai'xais Guardians and BC Parks.
 - *Discussion:* Questions from other Guardians... How has this collaborative pilot project changed your jobs?
- Evening: Bonfire!

May 10: Breakfast Together and Travel Home



ACTIVITIES

Hosted for the first time ever in Nuxalkulmc (Nuxalk Homelands), Bella Coola, the 2024 Annual Gathering focused heavily on cultural trips and activities, involving an incredible amount of knowledge-sharing from our gracious Nuxalk hosts.



Welcome Ceremony and Dinner – Nuxalk Hall

The opening feast and ceremony at Nuxalk Hall began with a prayer and welcoming words from community leaders. CSN Program Manager Aroha Miller also shared a few words to emphasize the importance of supporting the Guardians' stewardship work, so vital for their Nations, and thanked the entire Nuxalk community for hosting the gathering. After community members treated the group to a traditional dancing and singing, including mask dances, the magical night concluded with everyone joining together for a friendship dance.



Day 1: Petroglyphs and Cedar Weaving Class

No images were taken at the petroglyphs (rock carvings)—a sacred site that has been dated at approximately 14,000 years old—but the Guardians were treated to an enlightening discussion of Nuxalk history by Iris Siwallace and Chris Nelson. After lunch, the Guardians took part in a cedar weaving class, led by eight Nuxalk experts in this important cultural activity—an excellent bonding activity that give everyone a chance to get to know each other better.

Images, clockwise from top: Cynthia Pootlass shows Devon Marks, from the Haida Nation, how to do it right; Haida Guardian Cody Belcourt looks on as Melvina Mack demonstrates; Heiltsuk Guardian Doug Newman does his best to imitate the masters!



Day 2: Cultural Trip: Big Cedar and Hot Springs

After a group boat ride on South Bentinck Arm, the Guardians visited Lhkw' ti tsatsawlhp (Big Cedar) and x7piixm (Tallheo Hot Springs)—a great trip that showcased the beauty of Nuxalkulmc and highlighted the vital importance of stewarding these sites for natural and cultural heritage reasons.

The Guardians were in awe of the giant tree's 5-metre diameter, and both sites—the tree and the hot springs—provided excellent settings to discuss stewardship priorities.



Day 3: Nusq'lst Village and Guardians/Rangers Pilot Project

On Thursday, Guardians learned from Nuskmata and her son Orden Mack (pictured below, speaking to the group) about the history of Nusq'lst village. Nuskmata and her family are building a new cabin on this traditional site—the first to be built at Nusq'lst since 1862!



After lunch, the Guardians drove up the valley to Fisheries Pool Campground, where the Nuxalk and Kitasoo Xai'xais Guardians were joined by BC Parks representatives Steve Hodgson, Andrew Spear and Felicia Harris to discuss this collaborative project to share compliance and enforcement responsibilities. The session allowed Guardians from other Nations to ask questions and learn about this innovative project.



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We are truly grateful to the entire Nuxalk community for welcoming us into their home for the 2024 Coastal Stewardship Network Annual Gathering, and for the extensive help in planning accommodations, activities and everything else! CSN also thanks Environment Climate Change Canada for their generous financial support of this gathering.

