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The Salute to the Sockeye Festival: Sustainable Rural Tourism at the Adams River, Tsútswecw Provincial Park, British Columbia

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Abstract

Sockeye salmon have been returning to the Adams River in British Columbia for thousands of years. They are an ecological and cultural keystone species and a significant contributor to the rural tourism economy. However, salmon populations are in decline throughout the Pacific Northwest, putting rural communities, economies, and entire ecosystems at risk. The Salute to the Sockeye [the Salute] is a nature-based tourism festival celebrating the return of wild salmon to the Adams River. In this paper, we used Actor Network Theory as a lens to identify actors associated with the Salute and examine the relationships among them. Guided by a community-based participatory research methodology, we conducted 31 semi-structured interviews with stakeholders involved in the Salute to assess how the tourism festival can impact sustainability at the Adams River. We found that the Salute is an example of a nature-based tourism festival that contributes to socio-economic and environmental sustainability at rural, local and regional levels. Through active incorporation of Indigenous and local knowledge, the Salute can contribute to the sustainability of a species, support healthy ecosystems, and be a driver for change through environmental advocacy and education. This was particularly the case when a strong bridging organization was at the core of the tourism event, and stakeholders worked collaboratively with local Indigenous communities.

Keywords: Wild salmon; Conservation; Actor Network Theory; Nature-based tourism; Indigenous tourism; Rural and Indigenous communities; Parks and protected areas

Le festival du Salut au saumon rouge : Tourisme rural durable à la rivière Adams, parc provincial de Tsútswecw, Colombie-Britannique

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Résumé

Le saumon rouge retourne dans la rivière Adams, en Colombie-Britannique, depuis des milliers d'années. Il s'agit d'une espèce clé sur le plan écologique et culturel et un contributeur important à l'économie du tourisme rural. Cependant, les populations de saumon sont en déclin dans tout le nord-ouest du Pacifique, mettant en danger les communautés rurales, les économies et des écosystèmes entiers. Le Salut au saumon rouge [le Salut] est un festival touristique axé sur la nature célébrant le retour du saumon sauvage dans la rivière Adams. Dans cet article, nous avons utilisé la théorie des réseaux d'acteurs comme objectif pour identifier les acteurs associés au Salut et examiner les relations entre eux. Guidés par une méthodologie de recherche participative communautaire, nous avons mené 31 entretiens semi-structurés avec des parties prenantes impliquées dans le Salut pour évaluer l'impact du festival touristique sur la durabilité de la rivière Adams. Nous avons constaté que le Salut est un exemple de festival de tourisme axé sur la nature qui contribue à la durabilité socio-économique et environnementale aux niveaux rural, local et régional. Grâce à l'intégration active des connaissances autochtones et locales, le Salut peut contribuer à la durabilité d'une espèce, soutenir des écosystèmes sains et être un moteur de changement grâce à la défense de l'environnement et à l'éducation. Cela était particulièrement le cas lorsqu'une organisation de transition solide était au cœur de l'événement touristique et que les parties prenantes travaillaient en collaboration avec les communautés autochtones locales.

Mots-clés : Saumon sauvage; conservation; théorie des réseaux d'acteurs ; tourisme basé sur la nature ; tourisme autochtone ; communautés rurales et autochtones ; parcs et zones protégées

1.0 Introduction

For thousands of years, Adams River salmon have been returning to spawn in the waters of Cstellanetkwe (the Adams River Watershed) in Secwépemc'uluw (Secwépemc ancestral territory). The Adams River lies completely within Tsútswecw Provincial Park in the interior of British Columbia [BC], which has a legislative mandate to support Indigenous reconciliation commitments and protect natural and cultural values while allowing for recreational opportunities (Government of British Columbia, n.d. a). The Salute to the Sockeye Festival, a quadrennial nature-based tourism festival attended by hundreds of thousands of Canadian and international visitors, is hosted in the park to celebrate the dominant year of the sockeye salmon migration to the Adams River (Kruger et al., 2018). The Salute is an example of a nature-based tourism festival that relies on wild salmon and the environment in which they live. In this paper, we examine how the Salute can impact the socio-economic and environmental sustainability of the Adams River salmon run.

Provincial parks, which constitute 14.4% of the land base in BC, are critical to support biodiversity, a myriad of species, and sustainable tourism. More recently, provincial parks also played a critical role in delivering broader reconciliation efforts between Indigenous communities and various levels of government (Mason et al., 2022). BC has an extensive parks system that includes 14.1 million hectares, comprising a vast network of parks and other protected areas like conservancies, ecological reserves, and recreation areas (Government of British Columbia, n.d. b). Parks and protected areas are essential to salmon conservation throughout the province (Darimont et al., 2010). They also constitute the main capital for nature-based tourism (Kuenzi & McNeely, 2008). Decision-making and management within parks are particularly complex because they are part of a multifaceted socio-ecological system, whose management often requires tradeoffs between values of preservation and visitation (McCool et al., 2013). A growing integration of parks and protected areas into nature-based tourism demands the development and implementation of thoughtfully engineered planning partnerships (Elmahdy et al., 2017), with particular consideration for local Indigenous communities. Placing non-human actors at the centre and including bridging organizations in these partnerships can mediate between people, groups, and the environment in complex relationships to achieve conservation goals (Rathwell & Peterson, 2012). Ultimately, partnerships between park managers, Indigenous communities and the tourism industry can improve biodiversity, conservation, and sustainability (Pfueller et al., 2011).

While the Salute and the Adams River salmon run provide significant economic benefits to the surrounding community (Androkovich, 2015), the concentrated visitation is having negative impacts on local environments (Kruger et al., 2018). To determine whether the Salute offers an opportunity to reduce these negative impacts, we examine the relationships among actors at the Adams River salmon run. We asked three questions: (1) Who are the key actors at the Salute?; (2) What are the notable impacts of the festival?; and (3) Can the Salute contribute to environmental sustainability through advocacy and education? We demonstrated that a nature-based tourism festival held in a protected area focused on a non-human actor can contribute to the sustainability of a species and be a driver for change. This was particularly the case when a strong bridging organization was at the core of the tourism event, and stakeholders worked collaboratively with local Indigenous communities.

2.0 The Adams River Salmon Run and the Salute Festival

Salmon are an ecological and cultural keystone species that is essential to the communities and economies of BC. The presence of large salmon runs has been closely connected to the Indigenous livelihoods in the Thompson region since time immemorial (Ignace & Ignace, 2017), and many interior BC Indigenous communities still rely on wild salmon for food, cultural, social, and ceremonial purposes (Turner & Clifton, 2009). Non-Indigenous communities also depend on salmon as a food resource and fish for both sport and socio-economic purposes (Cooperman, 2017). Despite the importance of wild Pacific salmon to diverse peoples in BC, salmon populations throughout the province are in decline. There have been alarming fluctuations in salmon populations, namely the historically high return to the Adams River in 2010 followed by the historically low return in 2018. While many stakeholders speculate about who or what is having the greatest impact on salmon populations in BC, the main contributing factors are a combination of climate change, habitat loss, over-harvesting, and broader aspects of tourism consumption (Cohen, 2012).

The Salute is a celebration of wild salmon at Tsútswecw Provincial Park held in conjunction with the quadrennial dominant sockeye salmon run when they return in especially large numbers. During the month of October, typically a shoulder season for the BC tourism industry, an influx of thousands of visitors from across Canada and around the world visit the park (Kruger et al., 2018). Visitors stand at viewing stations alongside spawning channels to observe salmon. A recently installed wheelchair-accessible trail, funded through the Pacific Salmon Foundation, an organization that conducts research and supports conservation and advocacy for wild salmon in BC, makes it possible for nearly every visitor to view salmon from the main platforms. Visitors may join a tour hosted by volunteers from The Adams River Salmon Society (TARSS), Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO), and the Secwépemc community. After observing the salmon, people walk back through the main festival grounds to see local art displays, eat wild salmon, listen to live music, and read the park's interpretive signage (Kruger et al., 2018). Through stories, music, and displays, Secwépemc community members assert a leadership role in the Salute by sharing their cultural and historical connection to the land, the significance of salmon to their people, and guiding interpretive walks. Inside the TARSS interpretive cabin, volunteers explain the salmon life cycle to visitors and sell souvenirs that help fund other initiatives throughout the year (Kruger et al., 2014). The Pacific Salmon Foundation and other conservation groups present displays about wild Pacific salmon ecology and the challenges of salmon conservation. Shuswap Tourism provides visitor information involving volunteers and staff from the local Chambers of Commerce. Through these activities and educational efforts, the Salute can impact visitors and foster an understanding of salmon and salmon conservation.

3.0 Nature-based and Indigenous Tourism in Parks and Protected Areas

Nature-based tourism, a form of ecotourism in which nature is the primary attractant or setting, is one of the fastest-growing tourism sectors in the world (Stoddart & Nezhadhossein, 2016). These tourism economies are often dependent on parks, and as a result, nature-based tourism is increasingly being integrated into the development of protected areas (Elmahdy et al., 2017). Although nature-based tourism can align with the sustainable development of host communities, the

industry is increasingly under scrutiny for its environmental and cultural impacts (Buckley & Coghlan, 2012). High rates of visitation to protected areas can have biophysical impacts and degrade the environments and communities that support them. Best practice approaches to sustainable tourism development are often dependent on local contexts and should include close collaboration with local and Indigenous communities (Fletcher et al., 2016).

In Canada, the complex histories of park creation have further entrenched processes of dispossession, as colonial governments forcibly removed Indigenous peoples and took control of their lands and resources (Sandlos, 2008; Mason, 2014). Through the formation of protected areas, Indigenous peoples were displaced from ancestral territories, and forms of cultural repression were facilitated through the creation of the nation's first parks in the Canadian Rocky Mountains (Snow, 2005). Claims that Indigenous subsistence practices (hunting, fishing, and gathering) were the cause of dwindling wildlife populations in parks often formed the justifications given for removals. In this capacity, Indigenous peoples were repositioned as barriers to conservation (Binnema & Niemi, 2006). However, the subsistence practices of Indigenous peoples directly conflicted with the use of local wildlife by affluent tourists in sport hunting and fishing, which were fundamental to early tourism economies in many parks throughout Canada (Mason, 2020). Experiences of dispossession and cultural loss are shared with Indigenous communities internationally whose traditional territories were impacted through colonial systems of park creation and related tourism development (Rangarajan, 1996; Keller & Turek, 1999; Neumann, 1998; Ruru, 2017).

Indigenous leadership in protected area management varies across Canada. A variety of joint decision-making processes are considered under the broad term co-management (Clark & Joe-Strack, 2017). Indigenous peoples are increasingly more involved with co-management agreements, which include leadership, advisory roles, shared governance and consensus-based decision making (Artelle et al., 2019). While these initiatives have been important avenues for some Indigenous communities to assert their rights, not all co-management arrangements share nation-to-nation relationships, and colonial governments involved in these agreements are criticized for not supporting Indigenous-led decision-making processes (Finegan, 2018). In the 21st century, most parks in Canada are still predominantly controlled by federal and provincial governments even when co-management agreements with Indigenous nations are in place and active land claims may be present (Murray & King, 2012; Zurba et al., 2019**)**.

Indigenous tourism businesses, which are often located near or inside protected areas and preserve both natural and cultural resources, are key to community economic development strategies for many Indigenous communities globally (Butler & Hinch, 2007; Carr et al., 2016). For successful Indigenous-led tourism operations, co-management of Indigenous territories is a necessity (Zeppel, 2007). Co-management requires cultural and political sensitivity to ensure that product development and promotion are relevant to all stakeholders in Indigenous tourism (Reggers et al., 2016). All aspects of planning should be driven by Indigenous peoples to support respectful inclusion of representational imagery of Indigenous cultures (Seiver & Matthews, 2016). Critical aspects of Indigenous tourism rely on forming sustainable collaborations that empower Indigenous stakeholders. Using Indigenous guides and having Indigenous peoples present their own histories and cultures, with their own voices, can support knowledge translation for park visitors and engagement with

local peoples (Johnston & Mason, 2020). Moreover, incorporating Indigenous community values in the approaches to land use management can also contribute to sound conservation planning (Walker & Moscardo, 2016; Ruru, 2021).

While there is literature examining the problematic creation of Canadian national parks and early tourism economies, including the impacts on Indigenous communities, there is minimal research regarding tourism in BC Provincial Parks, and even less about Indigenous tourism in provincial parks (Clayton et al., 2011, Eagles et al., 2013). Furthermore, salmon research in BC has largely been conducted in coastal environments, with very few studies undertaken in the interior of the province. Research on salmon conservation in BC is predominantly from an ecological or biological perspective (Quinn, 2005). While historical perspectives of wild salmon runs and Indigenous relationships with salmon have been studied in BC (Evenden, 2004; Ignace & Ignace, 2017), investigations of nature-based and Indigenous tourism in provincial parks are very limited. This study specifically addresses these gaps and deepens the understanding of the role of actor relationships in salmon sustainability.

4.0 Actor Network Theory

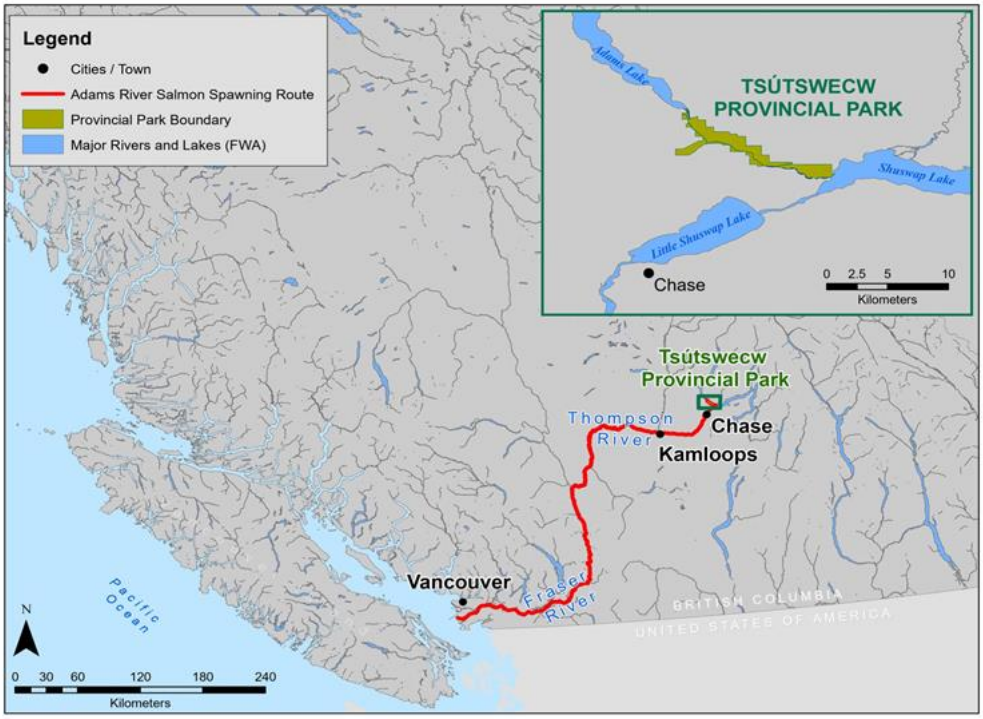
We use Actor Network Theory (ANT) as a lens for our research to identify, categorize, and analyze the network of actors involved in the conservation of wild Pacific salmon. ANT is an extension of social network analysis and treats social relationships as network effects. In doing so, all actors are important in understanding the fluidity of the network (Law, 1992). As ANT can be used to examine how aspects of an organization interrelate with each other, it can highlight the complexity of relationships and allow a focus on the connections among network actors, rather than on individuals (Martins & Dias, 2017). ANT is based on relationships, making it a dynamic model. Rather than simply identifying who the actors are, it can reveal what is occurring among actors with a focus on acting power relations.

In this paper, we identify actors in the network to inform who we included in the analysis and to look at the relationships among these actors. ANT attributes agency to non-humans, including animals, plants, climate, and environment, and recognizes that non-human actors can play critical roles in a network (Dwiartama & Rosin, 2014). ANT has been applied in research related to the interaction between humans and conservation, such as wildlife viewing activities, nature-based tourism festivals (van der Duim et al., 2013), and environmental resource governance (Bodin & Crona, 2009). Therefore, the theory was useful in the context of the Adams River salmon run because it allowed us to place salmon, a non-human actor, at the centre of the network of relationships, rather than focusing solely on humans. In addition to the salmon, the actors we included in this research are government representatives from fisheries and parks, land managers, tourists, Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities, conservation, and advocacy groups.

Previous research has already outlined the network of actors involved in all stages of the salmon lifecycle, as well as their geographic locations (Massey et al., 2021). In this analysis, actors are presented in alignment with the sockeye salmon life cycle, beginning at the Adams River and following the flow of water from the spawning grounds at the Adams River toward the Pacific Ocean. The geographic locations throughout Southern BC are presented in Figure 1. The location of actors in alignment with the sockeye salmon spawning cycle is presented in Figure 2. This

was an innovative application of ANT to examine the key actors that shape the sustainability of salmon, a non-human actor placed at the centre of the network. In this paper, our focus is on the specific actors who contribute to the Salute. These include actors near the Adams River watershed, around the Shuswap Lake, the South Thompson River, and Kamloops Lake, as well as those involved in the Salute who are geographically further away.

Figure 1. Map of Southern British Columbia and the migratory route of the Adams River sockeye salmon.

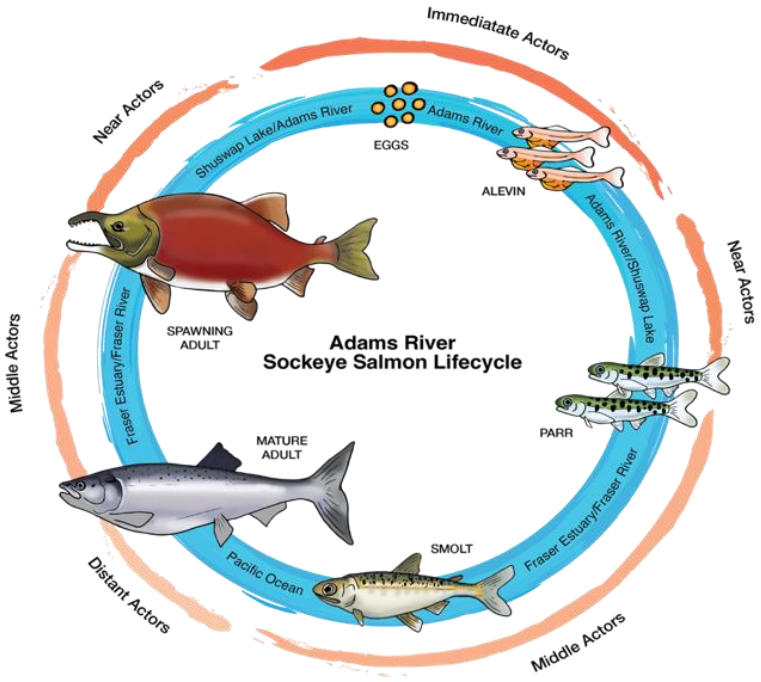


Source: Olea Vandermale.

Beginning at the Adams River in the interior, salmon move downstream through to the Thompson and Fraser Rivers and into the Pacific Ocean. They return via the Johnstone Straight or outer Vancouver Island to the mouth of the Fraser River and back upstream through the Fraser and Thompson Rivers to the Adams River (Quinn, 2005).

The salmon begin as eggs in gravel redds in the Adams River. They emerge as alevins and are flushed by the spring freshet downriver into Shuswap Lake, where they live as fry for one or two years. Before they leave the lake, they change into smolts. They swim down the South Thompson, Thompson and Fraser Rivers to the Fraser Estuary. They then swim into the Johnstone Strait and out into the open ocean, where they grow and mature. After two to three years, they return as mature salmon to the mouth of the Fraser River and swim approximately 400 km back upstream to the Adams River to spawn. After spawning, the adults die, and their bodies become the nutrition that sustains the alevins and fry of the next generation.

Figure 2. Adams River Sockeye Salmon Life Cycle.



Source: Original illustration by Alexis Shuffler, modified by Carmen Massey.

5.0 Methodological Approach and Methods

We used a community-based participatory research (CBPR) methodology because it places participants at the center of the knowledge creation process. CBPR improves the potential for long-term benefits derived from the research, including capacity building and conflict resolution strategies (Jagosh et al., 2015). This project involved diverse participants, including several Indigenous partners. Therefore we used this participatory methodology to foster trust and ensure that sensitive cultural knowledge was appropriately protected (Kovach, 2009). Trust is built between researchers and participants when CBPR involves participants in every stage of the research process. CBPR is guided by four principles: to promote active collaboration and participation at multiple stages of research; to foster co-learning; to support projects that are participant-driven; and to disseminate results in useful and culturally appropriate terms (O'Fallon & Dearry, 2002).

CBPR contributes to research that considers participants' needs, concerns, and perspectives (Frerichs et al., 2016). A central aspect of its framework is the input from community members to inform the development of research tools. Beginning in 2017, we built relationships with several local actors who were central to forming the direction of the project and laid the groundwork for this study. Actors shaped the research questions for the interview guide and provided practical suggestions to

approach other actors. Over several months prior to data collection, we consulted actors to understand the main issues from their perspectives and identify the most valuable methods of data collection. Interview transcripts were reviewed by the actors, and opportunity was given for additions, deletions or clarification. Through CBPR, we built meaningful recommendations for future actions and made this research relevant to the participants, stakeholders, and partners involved.

We conducted semi-structured, in-person interviews with 31 actors involved in the Adams River salmon run from January 2019 to April 2021, but almost all interviews took place in 2019 from January to July. Interviews were conducted with provincial and national government representatives, local non-Indigenous community organizations, researchers, Indigenous community leaders, and research, conservation, and advocacy organizations. Most participants were from the interior of BC, with some from the Fraser Valley, Metropolitan and Greater Vancouver, southern BC, and throughout the Pacific Northwest. Interviews averaged 1 hour and 15 minutes and were recorded and transcribed verbatim. In-depth responses were facilitated by open-ended interview questions (Hillman & Radel, 2018). Interview questions focused on four main themes: perspectives and knowledge of salmon and the ecosystems that support them; relationships within and between the organizations that manage salmon as a resource; the economics of salmon industries, including related tourism; and the barriers to or opportunities for collaboration in broader salmon policy development and conservation. We provided opportunities for feedback at all stages of the project. In particular, the development of the interview guide was a critical stage where we needed consultation with participants.

Interview transcripts were coded and analyzed to highlight recurring themes. Content analysis involved the authors reading through each transcript several times using open coding, then jointly discussing the categories to identify relevant sub-themes. Direct quotations, critical to demonstrating trustworthiness, are presented throughout the text to present participants' voices and perspectives as clearly as possible. To ensure reliability and accuracy, and to allow for edits before the research was consolidated into final themes, participants were provided with their own verbatim interview transcripts. All participants reviewed their transcripts for additions and deletions and to protect sensitive information.

Consent forms were distributed to all participants. Anonymity was offered but was unanimously declined by all participants. Participant names are associated with the quotations used throughout this text, demonstrating a clear desire for transparency and open collaboration. This project adhered to OCAP (ownership, control, access, and possession) principles and followed Tri-Council policies on ethical research with Indigenous communities. Ethics approval was granted by a University Research Ethics Committee (#102002). Upon completion of the project, all participants were provided with a summary of the research findings to disseminate to other stakeholders and community members. At the advisement of participants, findings have been shared at community-based symposiums and with relevant organizations, such as The Adams River Salmon Society.

6.0 The Effects of the Salute to the Sockeye Festival

In 2018, approximately 80,000 visitors attended the Salute, ten percent of whom were local students (Acton, personal communication, February 4, 2019). BC Parks rangers and other provincial and federal agency staff partnered to host groups on interpretive trail walks to explain the salmon spawning habitat and describe the role

of salmon in the ecosystem (DeArmond, personal communication, January 17, 2019). Although organized by a small group of actors, the Salute is important throughout BC and beyond. Thirty of the 31 interviewees, some living over 500 km from the Adams River, have attended at least one Salute. Twenty-one interviewees attended the festival in 2018, and 13 attended more than one festival in their lifetime. Responding to increasingly larger numbers of visitors to the Salute, in 1993, BC Parks, DFO, and local community volunteers collaborated to create TARSS to coordinate and help manage the flow of visitors to Tsútswecw Provincial Park during the Salute (DeArmond, personal communication, January 17, 2019). Despite this collaboration to create TARSS, due to a lack of ongoing consultation and established relationships, initially, Little Shuswap Lake Band (LSLB) was not included in the board of directors or in organizing and hosting the Salute. In recent years, however, LSLB has filled a permanent seat (one of ten seats) on the TARSS board. LSLB and other Indigenous community presence on the board has increasingly contributed to Indigenous peoples' involvement and leadership to organize and host the Salute. Don Paterson, President of TARSS during the 2018 Salute, spoke of this evolution within the TARSS organization:

> I think that it was probably 2016, maybe a bit before, that we recognized that with changing conditions…we [*TARSS*] had to be doing more than just be involved in helping Fisheries and Oceans and BC Parks to put on ostensibly, what's a big party. And so we became more involved in education, public awareness, interaction with government, and building relationships with First Nations communities. I think that was the essential transition from initially being involved solely with putting on a celebration or a party to beginning to meet a wider need. (Personal communication, January 8, 2019).

As TARSS is a not-for-profit organization working at arm's length from the government, it is able to apply for grants. TARSS also charges an entrance fee during the Salute, and the funds are used to improve facilities in the park. Paterson described the organization's original role:

> The whole purpose initially was to help the ministries of Parks and Department of Fisheries and Oceans manage the movements and activities of large numbers of people during specific time periods… .The whole thing on the [TARSS] group was to facilitate the arrival and departure of many people who are coming to see the fish and to… put on a number of different things, like the art show or the souvenirs or the teaching or the pamphlets or the tours… . (Personal communication, January 8, 2019)

The creation of the society was also a way to channel money back into salmon conservation. Acton explained:

> BC Parks and DFO were very instrumental in forming the society, they were the ones that chose the fact that the society was needed so the admission money coming into the event stays local. If it was put on by the government it would have to go into the general coffers of the government and not back into the area, so it was created by them and encouraged local people to form the society and really helped guide the society in the first few years. (Personal communication, February 4, 2019)

In addition to organizing and facilitating a welcoming, smooth-running festival, TARSS must work to maintain funding. They are one of the main actors working year-round to create a successful festival.

Visitors are profoundly influenced by the Salute, and interviewees described this impact in detail. Paterson recalled how visitors became aware of the need to protect salmon after experiencing the Salute (personal communication, January 8, 2019). He explained that a combination of physically seeing the salmon in their spawning ground, reading and listening to interpretive displays and music, tasting local food, exploring art, and experiencing the smell of decaying salmon is what makes attending the Salute so compelling as a nature-based tourism festival. Paterson also described that the opportunity for people to stand physically proximate to the river is what affects people the most:

> People walk away from it saying I'm different…one young woman was at the river with me with two little girls, probably five and seven, and we sat there together… . I pointed to a male fish in the river and it wasn't long after that the fish simply rolled on its side and ceased to be. And she said to me that is so sad but so beautiful. That is going to commit her to the Shuswap for the rest of her life because the experience was transformational and that is the object of the experience with tourism, is to simply say, you're not there to provide a commodity like a cup of coffee, you are providing something that is a life-affirming or life-transforming experience. (Personal communication, January 8, 2019)

Wes DeArmond, BC Parks Area Manager, described the Salute as a place of social connection:

> We have loggers, fishermen, miners, you name it, car salesmen, teachers, doctors, dentists, I mean you get the whole gamut, you get the whole perspective of individuals coming… and I mean it goes from every country, from every walk of life, so whatever it does it brings people, attracts people to come. (Personal communication, January 17, 2019)

The Salute has the power to affect the general public and instill concern for salmon conservation. Sunny Lebourdais, a local Secwépemc woman and Director of Transformation, Quelmente-Secwépemc, a government-to-government initiative in the region, explained her perspective of the power of the Salute and the Adams River salmon run:

> …it's [the Adams River salmon run] obviously hugely contributing to the overall sockeye runs in the Fraser, but I think it has become more than just numbers. It's a symbol of what used to be or what could be. And in a way it has become a bit of a litmus test or an indicator in a lot of people's minds… the Adams has got a lot of recognition publicly so I think it has a special role to play in what it can teach us because it has captured people's imagination. (Personal communication, July 9, 2019)

Local fishing guide and outfitter, Jason Bellows, explained the significance of the Salute in educating actors throughout the network and helping them realize the importance of the spawning habitat in the interior:

> … a lot of those people at the coast have never seen the spawning grounds, they have no idea. They fish the fish at the coast, they fish them in the Fraser [River], they fish them in the marine environment, they have no idea where their home is, they have no idea what it takes for them… . It's an education thing, right, so everybody wants to take advantage of the resource but they have no idea where the resource comes from, or what it takes for them to be happy here at home. (Personal communication, March 19, 2019)

Reiterating the perspective that the Salute holds a unique role in influencing people toward concern for salmon sustainability, Brian Riddell, president of the Pacific Salmon Foundation, summarized the reason his organization supports the festival:

> …because it's a particularly famous run and has lots of value for British Columbia and First Nations peoples we do put a priority on that making sure we support them when they come [for support] …it's [the Adams River Salmon Run] been referred to as one of the seven wonders of the world. It's not counted as number seven but it's probably number eight. In people's minds… it's a unique place and it's wild Pacific salmon. (Personal communication, February 6, 2019)

As a celebration of wild salmon, the Salute has an important role in influencing the Canadian public, and it is critical to the promotion of wild salmon conservation in BC.

With a Euro-Canadian presence in the region over the past 150 years, salmon celebrations involving Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples have been hosted at

various locations near the Adams River. Kathi Cooperman, a non-Indigenous, long-time resident and local agriculturalist, attended a salmon festival as a child. She described a carnival-like celebration held on LSLB lands, adjacent to Tsútswecw Provincial Park:

> I think the first Salute was in the 50s…They [Secwépemc community members] had people cooking on the spot, and bringing in salmon cooked in various ways, they had presentations and they had a movie about the salmon run and the return of the salmon… it was in these big circus tents along the Little River. I remember being so impressed by the jellied salmon… they were in regalia. I think the whole of Kamloops [a nearby city] came out for the event as they did every weekend anyway to go swimming. It was bumper to bumper traffic to come out to Shuswap Lake, Little Shuswap Lake. (Personal communication, January 31, 2019)

It was not until 1993 that the Salute was officially celebrated on BC Parks' land (DeArmond, personal communication, January 17, 2019), which is also within the traditional territory of the LSLB. DeArmond reflected on his involvement as part of the community hosting the festival:

> … the Salute's been going on since '56 but the reality is that the First Nations have been celebrating it for millennia…it's one of those things where you think oh yeah, I'm going to be there and help put the Salute on but … it's almost like it's part of the Shuswap, people start to smell it in the air, they start to hear about it in Mission and Chilliwack and Agassiz [communities in the Greater Vancouver Area hundreds of kilometers away] … (Personal communication, January 17, 2019)

Currently, the Salute plays a major role in local Shuswap and neighbouring communities; however, Colin Speikerman, president (2019) of TARSS, pointed out that obviously Indigenous communities celebrated and welcomed salmon back to the spawning grounds long before the Salute's existence:

> …this is the head of one of the largest salmon runs in the world, so it's a natural gathering place for people and has been for thousands of years…the story a thousand years ago would have been harvesting, catching, trading, eating and celebrating the salmon coming back, now it's…teaching people the importance of conservation on a larger scale, getting other people involved. (Personal communication, January 17, 2019)

Aaron Arnouse, a Secwépemc community member and band councillor for LSLB, explained that in addition to its many other impacts, the Salute could influence the public and other actors to help them understand the importance of salmon to

Indigenous peoples (personal communication, January 10, 2019). Secwépemc Kukpi7 (Chief), Oliver Arnouse, described why LSLB is involved in the Salute and what he saw as the future of the Salute for his community:

> …I see it going further. I see it as more people coming together to better understand what the Tsútswecw actually means and their part in it and their grandfathers' part in it and their grandmothers' and why we had that place, and today it's for everybody, not just us, so the memory I guess of the ancestors and the songs they sang and the ceremonies they did and the way they just walked on the earth, bringing those people, different generations, back together again to show people that it's still here. (Personal communication, January 29, 2019)

The Salute creates an opportunity for Indigenous peoples to maintain their own cultural and spiritual connection to salmon and share the value of salmon with non-Indigenous peoples. Aaron Arnouse affirmed that the Secwépemc community continues to welcome salmon back to the spawning grounds each fall, as they have since time immemorial. He described the ceremony honouring the returning salmon and its significance to the Secwépemc community:

> …our Elders, they do the First Fish ceremony every year the sockeye return. And that's one of the bigger cultural aspects that we do for our community, when the sockeye come home. And it's probably the most important one. (Personal communication, January 10, 2019)

Salmon are a cultural keystone species for Indigenous peoples in BC, and welcoming salmon back to the spawning grounds is a critical part of Indigenous peoples' culture. As the Salute continues, leadership by Indigenous communities to organize and host the Salute reflects the spirit of the ancient First Fish ceremony. The existence of a salmon celebration festival at the Adams River is a continuation of an enduring legacy that emphasizes the presence of Indigenous peoples in the region. Extensive collaboration among the actors at the Adams River, including diverse Indigenous and non-Indigenous partners that place salmon at the centre of the network, supports the sustainability of wild Pacific salmon for future generations.

7.0 Identifying Key Actors and Bridging Organizations

There are several key actors in the Pacific salmon network who come together to host the Salute. Most actors report an overall desire to protect spawning habitat and promote salmon conservation. The actors collaborating to host the Salute use the festival to promote their individual organization's interests, while simultaneously holding salmon conservation as their primary motivation. TARSS' board of directors and volunteers plan the Salute over the entire four-year salmon cycle to raise funds and coordinate the festival logistics, which culminates with the arrival of the dominant sockeye return to the Adams River. The board of directors of TARSS includes one representative from DFO, BC Parks, LSLB, the Village of Chase (a small community in the Shuswap), and Columbia Shuswap Regional District, and

up to six local residents, which may also include representatives from neighbouring Secwépemc communities. The diverse actors on the TARSS board means that it acts as a bridging organization among actors involved in the Salute and the salmon network at large. Although not all actors have a seat at the TARSS board table, many other actors have contributed to the Salute through in-kind and financial support. For example, the Pacific Salmon Foundation provided the funding to maintain viewing platforms, trail infrastructure, and a stage in 2014 and 2018. These upgrades significantly enhance salmon viewing opportunities and the overall visitor experience (Riddell, personal communication, February 6, 2019). Riddell pointed out that the Pacific Salmon Foundation display at the Salute, where staff can share information about wild Pacific salmon with a hard-to-reach public, is a valuable way to build awareness of salmon conservation issues (personal communication, February 6, 2019).

Involvement by local Indigenous communities is increasingly important to the actor group organizing the Salute. Aaron Arnouse explained that LSLB Secwépemc community members participate in interpretive tours and displays as a way to communicate their cultural values associated with salmon (personal communication, January 10, 2019). He noted the willingness of the LSLB community to engage with TARSS to organize the Salute:

> …preparing for the Salute…just the management of the park and working together and everyone, there's been a lot of changes in the past few years, with a couple of past presidents [of TARSS], in developing better relationships with Little Shuswap [LSIB], and that being they've created a First Nations policy… And since that's been done it's been a lot better and a lot easier working with the groups on it. (Personal communication, January 10, 2019)

He further discussed his community's involvement with BC Parks and other non-Indigenous community partners:

> …BC parks has been a good partner with Little Shuswap in the past…six years or so in working with us, and Wes DeArmond [BC Parks Area Manager] works closely with us from BC Parks. He's usually the first person to phone or send an email if something's going on with the park. He runs a lot of things by the Little Shuswap [LSIB], before anything happens. We're usually the first people he calls. And our other partnership is with the Adams River Salmon Society…we've been part of that group for a long time, ten years maybe. We work together and we attend meetings with them monthly. (Personal communication, January 17, 2019)

By maintaining salmon at the centre of the network, the regular, ongoing meeting of actors involved in organizing the Salute, through the facilitation of TARSS as a bridging organization, creates a central point of connection among the actors. For

example, DFO's involvement with the Salute through TARSS connects a large, often impersonal federal bureaucracy with the public. This means that TARSS, a relatively small, financially vulnerable not-for-profit organization, plays a critical role in the entire wild salmon actor network.

At varying times throughout the four-year planning cycle, the actor network at the Adams River broadens to include several other local and regional supporting organizations. Phil McIntyre-Paul, local trail advocate and tourism specialist, spoke to keeping salmon at the centre of the network and the motivation of the Shuswap Trail Alliance, a local environmental group, to work closely with TARSS at the Adams River:

> …consistently they [Secwépemc leadership] point us [the Shuswap Trail Alliance] to the water and to the salmon. Saying it must be in this framework, in this context, because ultimately water and salmon are such an important indicator of whether we're doing that well or not in this place. (Personal communication, February 5, 2019)

McIntyre-Paul further described how the Shuswap Trail Alliance worked closely with the actors at the Adams River in preparation for the 2014 Salute to design functional and culturally representative trails that would effectively move visitors through the park while minimizing impact on the environment:

> BC Parks asked us to come in and …we did a whole inventory of the Adams River Trail System, Roderick Haig-Brown Park [now Tsútswecw Provincial Park] trail system with an eye towards the planning that they were doing with the Little Shuswap Indian Band, the Adams River Salmon Society and the wider community leadership… so they asked us to do an inventory, with a thought toward sustainable trails… there was opportunity to redesign and it needed to be more resilient and more responsive to the shaping of the river…part of our redesign was to use social direction to move people where Parks [BC Parks] wanted them to go, and away from areas they wanted them to stay away from. (Personal communication, February 5, 2019)

Other community partners described working collaboratively with the actor group at the Adams River. Robyn Cyr, Manager of Shuswap Tourism, explained how she worked with TARSS, BC Parks, the Chamber of Commerce, the Shuswap Trail Alliance, and other community groups to promote the Salute and to create additional economic opportunities for local businesses. For example, she worked with partners to host media tours to the park and promoted surrounding amenities at an information tent during the three-week festival (personal communication, May 27, 2019). Darlene Koss, administrator for TARSS, described how schools from Kamloops and the North Okanagan region bring their students to the park, even in non-Salute years, to learn about salmon ecology in partnership with DFO, TARSS volunteers, and BC Parks staff (personal communication, January 8, 2019).

Although DFO is a significant actor throughout the entire wild Pacific salmon network, Tom Nevin, DFO Community Advisor for the BC Interior, described the importance of DFO's collaboration with actors directly at the Adams River:

> …the Salute to Sockeye has four partner groups that make the event so successful. They are...the Adams River Salmon Society, the Little Shuswap Lake Band, BC Parks and DFO. In recent years DFO has taken on the educational portion of the event for the organized school fieldtrips, as well as helped by having staff walk throughout the park educating people on salmon, answering questions and assisting in enforcing the rules of the park. The educational school sessions involve a salmon dissection [by DFO staff] as well as an ecology lesson led by the Ministry of Forests, Lands, Natural Resources Operations and Rural Development staff volunteers. About 8,000 students participated in our educational sessions for the 2018 Salute. (Personal communication, January 17, 2019)

Not only does the Salute build collaboration among organizations, Nevin observed that participation in the festival by DFO staff from across the province draws the organization together as a team:

> …for the actual Salute event itself I think we had about 70 DFO [paid] volunteers come to run the interpretive stations and walk the park trail system to interact with the visitors…The DFO volunteers came from all over the Pacific region…Terrace, Prince Rupert, Vancouver, Vancouver Island, the Fraser Valley, wherever there are DFO offices in BC, really… DFO rents a large house in Scotch Creek [adjacent the provincial park] and the out-of-towners [stay] there. (Personal communication, January 17, 2019)

The Salute provides opportunities for actors to connect with others in the network through the common goal of the conservation of wild Pacific salmon. In many cases, these are actors who would not normally have the opportunity to meet and interact. TARSS is the bridging organization that facilitates collaboration among actors. This maintains salmon, and the actors' mutual interest in the conservation of this keystone species, at the centre of the network.

8.0 Rural Sustainability at the Salute as a Nature-Based Tourism Event

Over the past three dominant Adams River salmon run years, in 2010, 2014, and 2018, salmon return and visitation to the Salute were unpredictable. The runs were characterized by large spikes in number of salmon, followed by extreme lows. In 2010, for example, Salute organizers were overwhelmed by the largest recorded sockeye salmon return (Acton, personal communication, February 4, 2019). Over 3.8 million fish returned to spawn, attracting over 100,000 visitors to Tsútswecw

Provincial Park. In 2018, only about 500,000 sockeyes returned to spawn, attracting approximately 80,000 people to the festival (Cooperman, 2017). The 2018 return of sockeye was one of the lowest on a dominant run to the Adams River, yet it still attracted a significant but even lower number of visitors.

The large concentration of visitors at the Salute during a short period of time led several interviewees to question the festival's impacts on salmon, habitat, rural communities and economies surrounding the Adams River. Environmental degradation related to nature-based tourism occurs at events like the Salute (Marion et al., 2016), including tourists destroying critical wild salmon spawning grounds or interfering with salmon spawning activity (Paterson, personal communication, January 8, 2019). Jim Cooperman, president of Shuswap Environmental Action Society, and one of the founding members of TARSS, referred to this issue:

> …certainly, having so many people all around them [the salmon] could have an impact but I don't know how you could measure it or how large of an impact. (Personal communication, January 31, 2019)

McIntyre-Paul described the irony of hosting the Salute to enhance salmon sustainability:

> There's this crazy migration and then this weird migration of people because they're compelled to come and see …and how that has to be managed. Otherwise in our pure human curiosity and amazement you could see how we would just run amuck and destroy the whole thing. It's had ten thousand years for the salmon to come back and make this place super cool again, after the ice age. And now in an instant we've got so excited about it that we're going to obliterate it. (Personal communication, February 5, 2019)

Darrel Hillaire, an Indigenous man from the Lummi Tribe in Washington State, is developing a film tracing the salmons' journey up the Fraser River from the Lummi ancestral home in the Salish Sea to the spawning grounds in the LSLB traditional territory. He spoke cautiously about the impacts of tourism on salmon habitat:

> I think there would be some places where we [Lummi] would have an opportunity to share [culture] out on the water, but you know, I think we would do more damage than good if we brought too many people. So if it's disturbing to the environment or the salmon's life, I don't think we'd want to do that. They are there for one purpose and that's to extend the cycle of life and the miracle of life. And the salmon is so integral to everybody's lifeline, the humans, animals, trees, the soil, and why would you want to interrupt that? (Personal communication, June 13, 2019)

Sustainability concerns about the Salute were not confined to the immediate issues at the spawning grounds. While tourism plays an important role in influencing the

public and fostering conservation efforts, it can have negative impacts on the surrounding communities and local rural economies.

For the surrounding community, the Salute is often touted as an economic opportunity upon which local businesses can capitalize. However, at least two interviewees raised concerns about the economic sustainability of the Salute, mostly due to the unpredictability of both salmon and visitors (Acton, personal communication, February 4, 2019; Paterson, personal communication, February 4, 2019). The Salute is only held every four years in conjunction with the dominant salmon run, and creating economic opportunities for the surrounding communities based on a quadrennial event is a challenge. While businesses appreciate the potential revenue from the large influx of visitors to the Salute, they are hesitant to expand based on an intermittently occurring festival (Cyr, personal communication, May 27, 2019; Demenok, personal communication, June 8, 2019). TARSS also struggles with the dilemma of sustaining a festival that runs every four years (Paterson, personal communication, January 8, 2019). TARSS was set up to support the Salute, but stable funding and human resource capacity based on a quadrennial festival is a constraint for the organization. Unpredictable and/or diminishing salmon returns directly affect the survival of the organization and the Salute itself (Koss, personal communication, January 8, 2019). Acton explained that expenses for the Salute are incurred in advance of knowing exact visitor numbers; however, the number of visitors determines the revenue levels necessary to cover festival expenses. By the time the salmon and visitors arrive, it is too late to adjust expenses to match the revenue. If lower levels of fish return than expected, potentially fewer visitors may be attracted to the festival, and revenues may be lower, putting the organization in financial jeopardy. Additionally, if more people attend than anticipated, the grounds and organizers may not be prepared for the increase in the volume of visitors.

Since the 1980s, rising visitation to the Salute has intensified pressures on surrounding communities. People visiting the Salute by bus or car cause long lines of traffic, backing up local roads at the height of the salmon run (Cooperman, personal communication, January 31, 2019). To alleviate the pressure, local residents volunteer to park cars and host visitors but are left exhausted and frustrated that they are not able to provide better facilities or programming. By organizing and coordinating the Salute and managing the large influx of visitors to the park, TARSS alleviates pressures from traffic control issues, waste management, visitor services, and physical impacts from people trampling the forest and spawning beds. However, the continued evolution of TARSS's priorities and focus as an organization is evidenced by their lobbying the BC Government in 2016 to change the name of Roderick Haig-Brown Provincial Park to Tsútswecw Provincial Park, the historical place name given by the LSLB leadership and Elders (O. Arnouse, personal communication, January 29, 2019). Through these types of actions, the organizations and community members hosting the Salute demonstrate a willingness to adapt and change to support sustainability at the Adams River salmon run. Support for TARSS will be important to the future of the Salute and wild salmon sustainability efforts at Tsutswecw and in BC. Although relatively small in size and influence, TARSS draws together the wider actor network through collaboratively hosting this nature-based tourism festival.

9.0 Conclusion

Situating wild salmon at the centre of the Adams River salmon run network was a significant conceptual and theoretical aspect of this research. This innovative application of ANT used a geographic representation of the network actors in alignment with the salmon life cycle. This situated a non-human actor at the centre of the network, and this should be considered a productive model for application in future research. The Adams River remains one of the most prolific wild salmon systems in the world, and collaboration between actors in the network is essential to the future survival of the salmon run. Across the province, Indigenous and non-Indigenous policymakers, environmental groups, commercial fishermen, and fisheries managers monitor salmon populations, allocate harvest levels, and enforce regulations (Massey et al., 2021). Directly at the Adams River, a subset of actors use tourism as a way to enhance salmon sustainability by collaboratively hosting the Salute.

TARSS, the key bridging organization at the Adams River, creates both a space and a mechanism for the various actors in the network to support the return of wild salmon to the region. A commitment by the actors in the network to collaborate with TARSS is imperative for the continuation of the Salute and the benefits it brings to the entire network. Addressing the constraints that face TARSS and the Salute itself will be important to the long-term health of the Adams River salmon run. While increasing tourism and visitation to the Adams River has the potential to damage this critical salmon spawning ground (through riparian disturbance, bank erosion and the disruption of spawning activity), actors highlighted the benefits of the Salute and the objective to balance that with any negative impacts. However, future studies should independently verify the impact of visitation on the spawning grounds themselves.

The festival not only promotes salmon conservation, advocacy, and education (Kruger et al., 2018), but it is a way for Indigenous communities to share their cultural and spiritual connection to the land, water, and salmon. The Salute also brings awareness to the decline of salmon populations. Incorporating Indigenous cultural values in the interpretation of this unique place can contribute to conservation management and greater knowledge dissemination (Walker & Moscardo, 2016). Continued commitment by the actor network to support Indigenous communities to lead the Salute will be imperative to sustain the meaningful work that has occurred over the last two festivals. There have been a number of further progressions in the actor network after the primary research for this project was complete: (1) In 2022, the Salute was Indigenous-led; (2) BC Parks have established a Ranger/LSLB Guardian pilot program through consultation with local Secwépemc communities; and (3) the construction of a Secwépemc Winter Home (c7ístkten) near the festival site allows for increased Indigenous interpretive opportunities inside the park. The researchers consider these to be significant changes that will support both the sustainability of the network and broader reconciliation processes.

Local Indigenous communities have been raising alarm bells about diminishing salmon returns to natal spawning grounds. The Salute amplifies the voice of actors calling for enhanced protection of habitat in the interior of BC, and the reduction of commercial and sport fisheries activity in coastal BC to ensure a viable salmon population for the future. The interior of BC is also experiencing unprecedented levels of environmental change, especially notable for the river ecosystems salmon

depend upon are decreased stream flows, increased water temperatures, and erratic flooding events. Despite these rapidly changing environmental conditions that are contributing to smaller and more unpredictable salmon returns, harvesting of salmon for economic benefit and as a critical food source continues. It is imperative that tourism operators understand that unharvested salmon are valuable to the ecosystem as an ecological and cultural keystone species, and to local economies for tourism and wildlife viewing opportunities.

As salmon populations continue to decline, pressure is mounting on decision-makers to protect salmon for current and future generations. Collaboratively hosting the Salute shifts the focus of the actor network from harvesting interests to prioritizing habitat concerns and will create more effective salmon conservation decision-making. Indigenous and local knowledge is imperative to guide priorities and focus policy efforts that will enable the actors to respond more appropriately to issues facing salmon populations. As climate change presents further challenges to all ecosystems within the province, each salmon arriving back home to spawn is vital and must be given full priority. Keeping salmon at the centre of this actor network is essential for salmon survival, and it is also one mechanism to ensure that healthy watersheds in the interior BC are given the highest priority.

Building on the participatory approach employed in this project, further research could contribute to the mounting body of work that examines how Indigenous knowledge and experiences of ecosystems may further support conservation efforts (Artelle et al., 2019; Mitchell et al., 2021; Mason et al., 2022). Indigenous perspectives, traditional knowledge, and observations about the effects of climate change on salmon populations could also inform new management approaches that shape the sustainability of the Adams River salmon run and the rural communities, economies, and ecosystems that depend on salmon for generations to come.

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