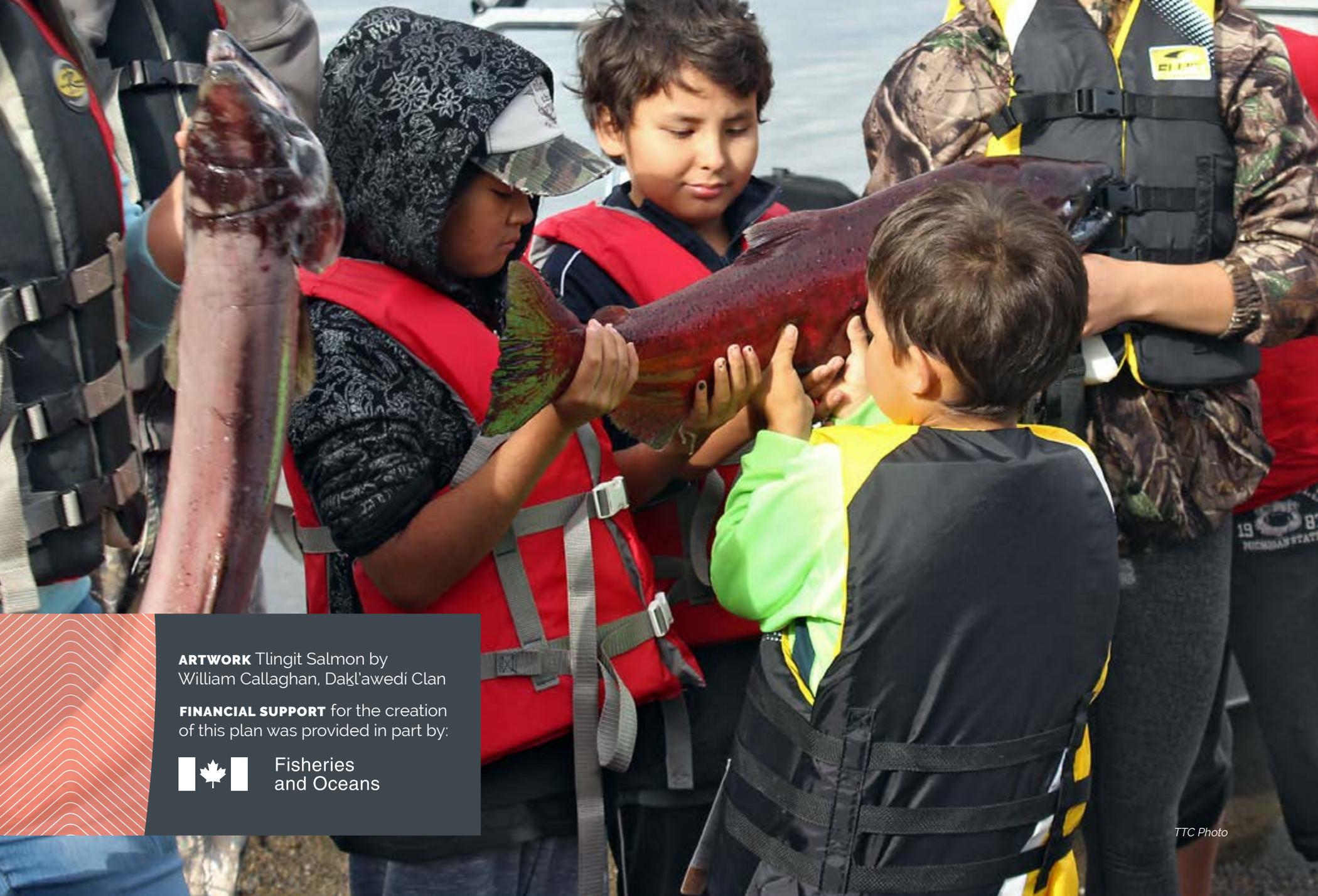


GUNALCHÉESH GUNALCHÉESH  
T'Á KEI.ÓOWAX'Á GUNALCHÉESH  
THE SALMON ARE HERE

**TESLIN TLINGIT COUNCIL SALMON PLAN  
2018-2025**





**ARTWORK** Tlingit Salmon by William Callaghan, Dakl'awedi Clan

**FINANCIAL SUPPORT** for the creation of this plan was provided in part by:



Fisheries and Oceans

## A MESSAGE FROM THE TESLIN TLINGIT COUNCIL (TTC) SALMON ADVISORY GROUP

Máa sá yee yatee? The TTC Salmon Advisory Group is honoured to be working for our people on this important issue. Much work has been done so far, with many years of sacrifices made by our Citizens, to help ensure that the Salmon People are here for future generations. Part of this effort has been to review and renew our TTC Salmon Plan, which we are happy to see move into its second iteration. This plan is based upon the teachings of Haa Kústeeyí with the direction of our Elders and Citizens. Through its implementation, this refreshed plan expands its vision to also include meaningful collaboration with all First Nations and Tribes along the Yukon River, in both Yukon and Alaska. This plan must respect how each Nation and Tribe will choose to safeguard our precious T'á, but it must also be coordinated to get us all working together towards a common long-term goal. We look forward to continuing this work for our future generations.

*One River, One Salmon, Together.*

Gunalchéesh,  
The TTC Salmon Advisory Group



## MESSAGE FROM NAA SHÁADE HÁNI

We are the Teslin Tlingit. For generations we have occupied the headwaters of the Yukon River. For generations the salmon have brought us together as families and as a nation, keeping us healthy. It is now our turn to care for them. It is our duty as leaders to protect and conserve the salmon and their ecosystem, knowing that our efforts today will be beneficial for generations to come.

— Achéino. Richard Sidney  
*Naa Sháade Háni,  
Teslin Tlingit Council*

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# OVERVIEW

Teslin is located at the headwaters of the mighty Yukon River. The Teslin watershed represents both the beginning and the end of one of the most complex and significant life cycles on earth: that of the Yukon River Chinook salmon. Over 25% of Yukon River Chinook that originate in Canada come from the Teslin watershed. These salmon swim over 3000 km downriver to the Bering Sea and years later make the difficult journey upriver over that same distance to spawn in their home streams.

Sharing these important headwaters with Yukon River Chinook is the Teslin Tlingit Council (TTC). We are a self-governing First Nation with a Traditional Territory that ranges over the Teslin River and Big Salmon River watersheds, in both the Yukon and British Columbia. For time immemorial, we have been stewards of the land, air, and water, and this environment shapes who we are as a people. The salmon that come home to these waters to spawn, the juveniles that rear in these creeks, and all life that depends upon this cycle form part of our Tlingit story.





*Peter Mather Photo*

## Background

Teslin-origin Chinook are the farthest travelling stock in the Yukon River and, over their five to seven years of life, are subjected to countless pressures along the length of the river and in the Bering Sea. These salmon are, therefore, a sensitive indicator of the state of the whole system. Over 25 years ago, Chinook salmon in the Teslin watershed began to show indications that all was not well. Recognizing these warning signs, TTC Citizens voluntarily reduced their harvest and began to reach out to other users and those with management responsibilities along the Yukon River in hopes of raising awareness and stimulating action. Unfortunately, population size and other health indicators continued to worsen in the subsequent years. Critically low returns of spawning Chinook salmon to the Yukon River drainage and observations of declining spawner size and health became a common report from more and more fishers along the length of the river.

We have always practiced our rights of harvesting and governing, even before self-government was recognized by Canada, but eventually it became clear that TTC needed to formalize its vision and plan for protecting the Chinook. In 2010, TTC developed the first Teslin Tlingit Salmon Plan – *A Plan to Address the Crisis of the Chinook Salmon Population Decrease*. Over the life of the 2010 plan, increasingly conservative harvest closures were supported by our Citizens as Chinook numbers continued to dwindle. While this conservative approach to harvest was an important step, it has had serious implications for our cultural health. Today, many of our youth have never had the opportunity to harvest salmon with their families at fish camp, and our knowledge holders are running out of time to pass along these practices. Our relationship with salmon is at risk.

We are part of the land, part of the water.

— Gadzóosdaa, Virginia Smarch



TTC recognizes the passing of Sarah Wolfe and thanks her family for the use of this image.

*Peter Mather Photo*

## Management Along the Yukon River

In recent decades, management actions along the Yukon River have been both reactionary and short-term, with a focus on harvest. The Chinook salmon life cycle occurs over five to seven years and management actions taken now will determine the fate of a new generation of salmon many years from now. As such, year-to-year management of Chinook salmon is not appropriate, and continues to put the long-term recovery of this population at risk. It is critical that plans and actions take a long view that considers both the anadromous, multi-year salmon cycle and the intergenerational needs of our communities.

Further, we recognize that harvest management alone will not bring our salmon back. Indeed, harvest is only one piece of the salmon puzzle. As stewards of this important headwater to the Yukon River Drainage, TTC has consistently opposed development and activities that threaten salmon in this habitat and elsewhere.

We also acknowledge that there are many lives and communities that depend on a healthy population of Yukon River Chinook salmon. TTC has worked tirelessly to engage with Yukon and international stakeholders to share information and search for collaborative solutions.

## Salmon for All. Salmon for All Time

The 2010 Plan was an important milestone in TTC's efforts to protect Yukon River Chinook and their habitat; much has changed, though, in the past eight years, and it is time to measure our successes and challenges and refresh our vision.

**Maintaining the Tlingit relationship with salmon into the future is our highest priority.** We will continue to be leaders in decision making that protects Chinook salmon and the Teslin Tlingit cultural identity.

Of course, a robust Chinook population is integral to a healthy Tlingit–salmon relationship, and our vision, goals, and actions support this reality. This latest edition of the TTC Salmon Plan recognizes the importance of measuring the success of our work to rebuild Chinook salmon numbers and stock health more appropriately over the six- to seven-year span of the Chinook life cycle. The Plan also reaffirms the importance of our role in the protection of these salmon throughout their entire life cycle, not just those stages which take place in the TTC Traditional Territory.

# PLAN REVIEW AND DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

The review and revision of the first Teslin Tlingit Salmon Plan – *A Plan to Address the Crisis of the Chinook Salmon Population Decrease (2010)* – began in 2017. An advisory group (AG) was formed, with representatives from Executive Council, Youth Council, Elders Council, and the Teslin Tlingit Renewable Resources Council, and with technical support from the TTC Lands and Resources Department.

## TIMELINE

### ● Time Immemorial

Teslin Tlingit and the Salmon People of the Yukon River co-exist; fish camps form part of the seasonal round for Tlingit families, with fishers taking only what is needed and ensuring all harvest is used

### ● Early 1990s

Many TTC Citizens begin self-limiting their harvest of Chinook

### ● 2010

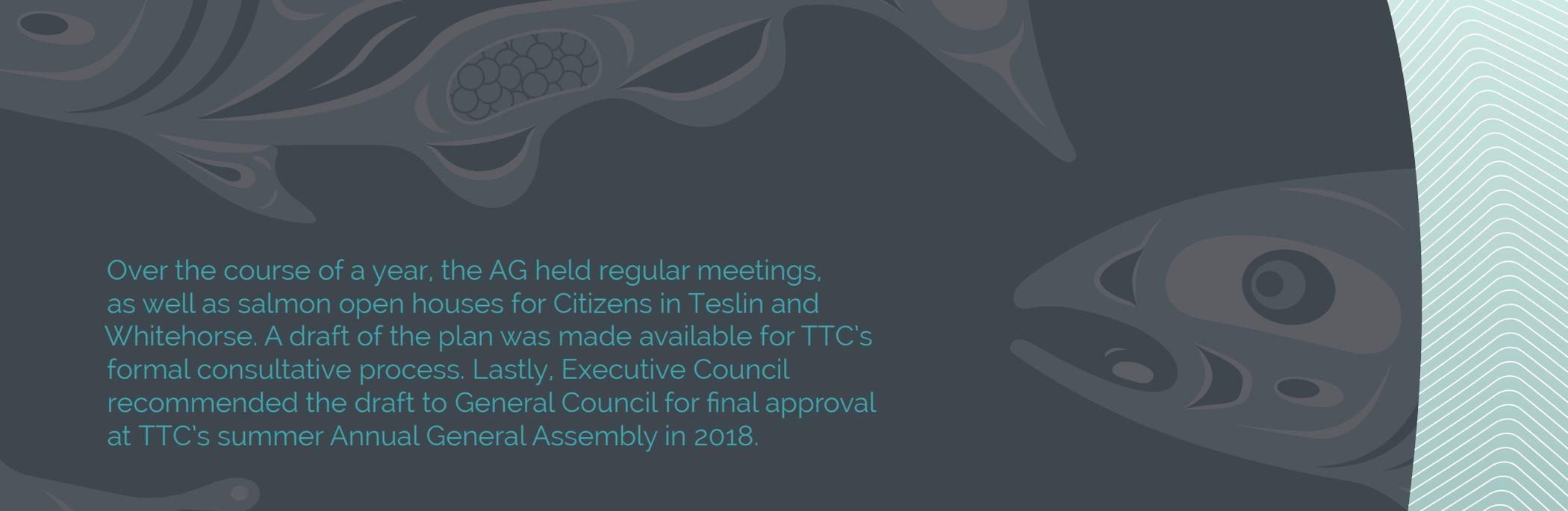
First TTC Salmon Plan plus escalating closures and fishing restriction resolutions passed by TTC every year through to 2013

### ● 1980s

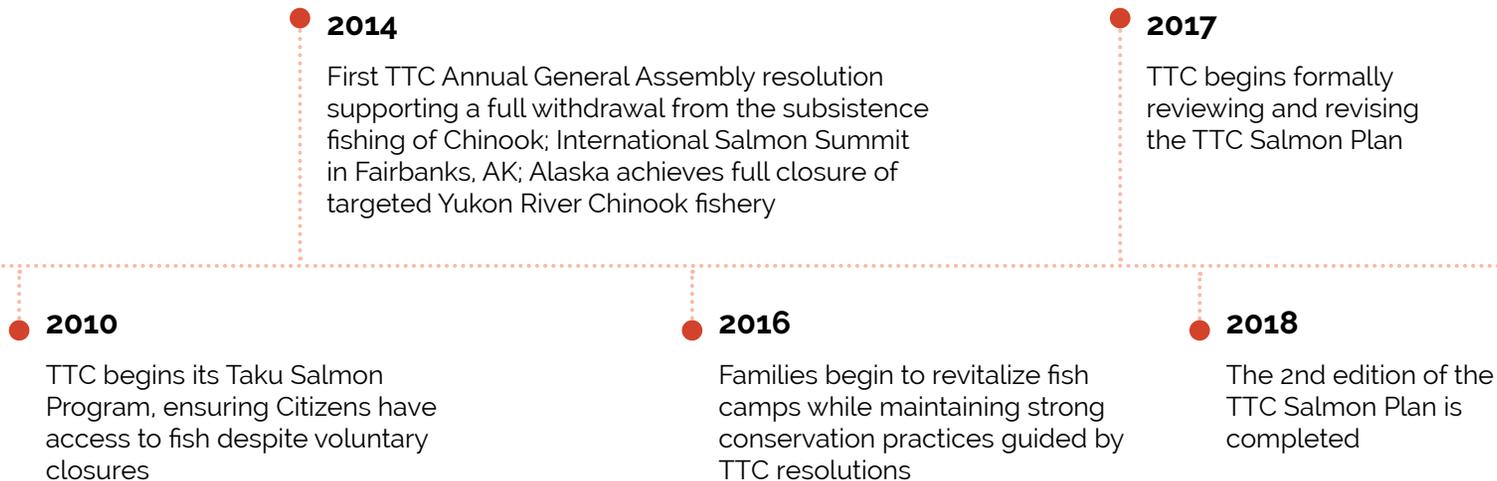
First signs that the Yukon River Chinook salmon population may be struggling; directed research and restoration projects begin to occur on an annual basis

### ● 2009

TTC passes first resolution supporting partial closures and household limits



Over the course of a year, the AG held regular meetings, as well as salmon open houses for Citizens in Teslin and Whitehorse. A draft of the plan was made available for TTC's formal consultative process. Lastly, Executive Council recommended the draft to General Council for final approval at TTC's summer Annual General Assembly in 2018.



# VISION

Our vision is to ensure a healthy, enduring Teslin Tlingit relationship with Yukon River Chinook salmon, grounded always in Haa K̓usteeyí, our Tlingit way of life.

We will reach our vision through cultural restoration, knowledge gathering and creation, traditional Tlingit governance, fostering a healthy Tlingit ecosystem, seeking unity with others along the river in all that we do, and ensuring our actions do not harm other people, animals, or ecosystems.

# GOALS



Page 13 · jinkaata ƙa n̓as'k

## CULTURAL RESTORATION

Revitalize the traditional relationship with Chinook salmon and the intergenerational transfer of knowledge critical to the cultural health of the Teslin Tlingit.



Page 15 · jinkaata ƙa keejin

## KNOWLEDGE GATHERING & CREATION

Strengthen traditional and scientific knowledge of Yukon River Chinook salmon for TTC and others, and improve the long-term productivity and resiliency of Teslin-origin salmon.



Page 17 · jinkaata ka daaxadooshú

## ONE RIVER, ONE PEOPLE

Foster strong relationships with others who depend on Chinook along the Yukon River, and improve TTC's influence over international approaches to Chinook salmon conservation.



Page 19 · jinkaata ka gooshúk

## GOVERNANCE

Ensure that Teslin Tlingit salmon management continues to be based in traditional law, adheres to conservation-based approaches, and promotes a deep respect for Chinook salmon and their importance to the environment, wildlife, and people.



Page 21 · tleikáa ka tléix'

## HEALTHY TLINGIT ECOSYSTEMS

Ensure the responsible care and stewardship of the entire complex and culturally significant ecosystem in which Chinook salmon and Teslin Tlingit exist.





# CULTURAL RESTORATION

## Tlingit Teachings

Ch'áagu haa kusteeyí,  
ch'a yaa shukakgaxeex –  
Haa yát'xi has du jeeyís.

*We must care for our children, teach and nurture our youth, and help them to learn our values, traditional knowledge, and rites of passage.*

## We value

- Traditional teachings
- Our Tlingit relationship with salmon
- Strengthening family and community
- Our language and culture

## Strategies

1. Provide opportunities to Citizens, through programming, events, and employment, to support the intergenerational transfer of Tlingit ecosystem knowledge and to support culture and language development and sharing.
2. Ensure Teslin Tlingit traditional laws guide and inform the actions of TTC regarding salmon and their ecosystems.
3. Continue to encourage Tlingit language learning at work, home, and school.
4. Improve the accessibility of Tlingit knowledge and teachings for TTC Citizens.





# KNOWLEDGE GATHERING & CREATION

## Tlingit Teaching

Ch'áagu yaa kúsgéiyi woosh kaadé  
seduwahéi – Ldakát yéidáx daséigu át,  
yaa áyá du wunéi.

*We must always show our respect and care  
for the natural ways of the land and living  
things and acknowledge and respect the spirit  
in all living things.*

## We value

- Understanding the world through different ways of knowing, including traditional knowledge and science-based knowledge
- Stock and habitat restoration
- Capacity building in our community

## Strategies

1. Develop full-time and seasonal work opportunities and identify training opportunities for TTC Citizens in support of the salmon ecosystem.
2. Develop and implement restoration projects that are scientifically sound, strongly informed by Tlingit knowledge, and culturally and traditionally appropriate.
3. Maintain existing monitoring programs, and expand on these successes to establish more comprehensive water, habitat, and population monitoring in the Traditional Territory.
4. Expand on current restoration and monitoring programs through support from external funding and partnerships that will encourage long-term success.
5. Strategically gather traditional knowledge to inform salmon monitoring and restoration throughout the Traditional Territory.
6. Improve data and information management systems for TTC salmon programs and projects to better inform future work.





# ONE RIVER, ONE PEOPLE

## Tlingit Teaching

Tléix' héen, tléix' ku.oo yáx haa yatee –  
 Ách áyá, woosh yaa áyá du wunéi ka woosh  
 yaa tudegaax ch'a daa sá een.

*We must care for everyone in the community  
 and share our benefits of life with others.*

## We value

- Drainage-wide cooperation and coordination, respectful of diversity along the Yukon River
- International awareness of the state of Yukon River Chinook salmon
- Our role as stewards of the salmon headwaters

## Strategies

1. Continue to set a strong example of conservation-based management approaches for all who use and depend on salmon.
2. Continue to develop communication tools that enable TTC to share messaging to diverse audiences.
3. Prioritize the most strategic and effective audiences for communication efforts, based on TTC's vision and goals.
4. Strengthen TTC's direct involvement in international salmon management processes.





# GOVERNANCE

## Tlingit Teaching

Gamín kóox' – Ldakát haa kusteeyí,  
haa yoo x'atángi, haa shagóon,  
tlíl kut kei aa.ooxíjji.

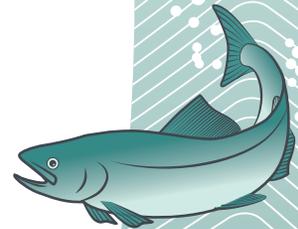
*We must always make decisions that protect  
the interests of future generations.*

## We value

- Traditional decision making
- Conservation-based management
- Community leadership and support
- Strategic approaches to complex, dynamic issues

## Strategies

1. Ensure that TTC's approaches to salmon conservation and management align with traditional and modern governance practices of the Teslin Tlingit.
2. Implement a long-term holistic management model that considers run size, quality, and productivity in determining management actions.
3. Ensure consistent communication and collaboration between all levels of TTC government regarding Chinook salmon conservation and initiatives, including among departments and Councils.





# HEALTHY TLINGIT ECOSYSTEM

## Tlingit Teaching

Yá Lingít aaní kudáan káx̄ –  
Ldakát uwáan haa yéi jinéi yáx̄ sitee.  
K'idéin tulatíni ch'a daa sá héendáx̄  
daséigu át, k'idéin dáx̄ tulatíni.

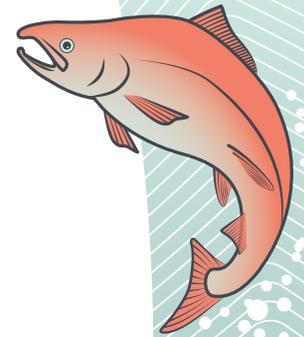
*Each Person has responsibilities to the Creator  
– to care for the air, the land, the water and  
all living things in the air, on the land or in  
the water.*

## We Value

- Holistic approaches
- The inherent rights and value of salmon
- Healthy populations of all plants and animals
- Unique and thriving headwater ecosystems
- The needs of other living things that may depend on salmon

## Strategies

1. Ensure that development and land use planning processes are environmentally sound and respect the continued health of the Tlingit ecosystem.
2. Maintain healthy populations of other food species.
3. Work towards a more comprehensive understanding of the biological needs of salmon in the headwaters ecosystem.
4. Consider the needs of other species that rely on healthy salmon populations in management and decision-making processes regarding salmon and their ecosystem.



# MANAGEMENT MODEL AND ACTIONS

## **Yukon River Chinook Salmon Run Health Index**

While the number of Chinook salmon crossing the U.S.–Canadian border each year is an important number for local and drainage-wide management, TTC recognizes the importance of other indicators of population health in implementing sustainable harvest practices. These include the ratio of males to females, the age structure of the run, and productivity trends. While this is not a comprehensive list of all variables that determine run health, we will consider these representative factors, in addition to border escapement, when making in-season management decisions. We will also consider the multi-year life cycle of Chinook salmon and past trends, as opposed to a year-to-year approach. As always, TTC will continue to make decisions with an emphasis on conservation and in line with Haa Kusteeyi.

Once TTC has made an informed in-season decision, Citizens will require meaningful, real-time information to make their own decisions regarding harvest. To these ends, TTC has developed a Yukon River Chinook Salmon Run Health Index.

This tool will provide TTC with a consistent approach into the future that supports the conservation and rebuilding of Chinook stocks through harvest restriction actions when necessary and provides sustainable harvest opportunities for TTC Citizens when possible.

# HARVEST MANAGEMENT MODEL INPUTS AND RUN HEALTH ASSESSMENT OUTPUTS

## INDICATORS OF POPULATION HEALTH

Male:Female  
Ratio

Border  
Escapement

Age  
Classes

Productivity

## RUN HEALTH RATING:



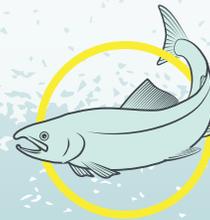
### Extreme Conservation Concern

- Community fish camp (no harvest)
- Conservation closure



### Poor Run Health

- Community fish camp (no harvest)
- Subsistence harvest not advised



### Moderate Run Health

- Community fish camp (small harvest)
- Reduced subsistence harvest advised

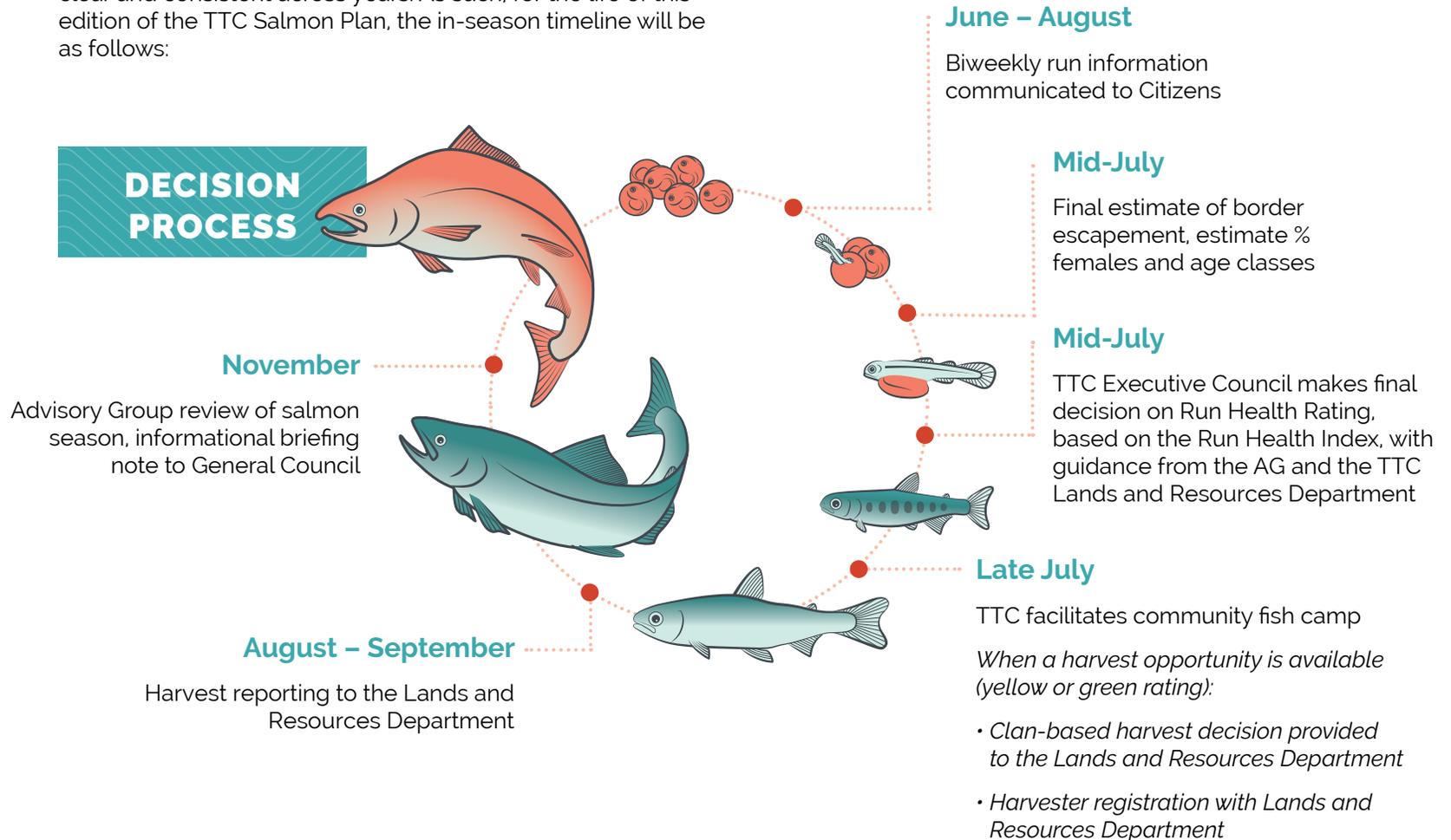


### Healthy Run

- Community fish camp
- Normal subsistence harvest

## Teslin Tlingit Council In-season Decision Process

In recognition of both the Chinook salmon multi-year life cycle and Citizens' information needs for stewardship decisions, it is important that the in-season decision-making process be clear and consistent across years. As such, for the life of this edition of the TTC Salmon Plan, the in-season timeline will be as follows:



# IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

## 2018

Begin implementing the revised TTC Salmon Plan, starting with finalizing a multi-year work plan that identifies activities, responsibilities, resources required, and measures of success.

## Annually

Each year (January), the Advisory Group, with support from the TTC Lands and Resources Department, will meet to assess work plan priorities for the year, review activities and progress from the previous salmon season, and prepare for the upcoming season. The Advisory Group will make recommendations for appropriate TTC Councils and Departments regarding work plan needs and salmon-related decision making. AG members will also be called on throughout the year to participate in and advise on a variety of salmon-related matters, including cultural and educational programming, policy development and inter-agency management discussions.

## 2024

Plan evaluation and renewal phase begins.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

First and foremost, we would like to acknowledge our Elders and teachers who have helped to keep our Tlingit relationship with the Salmon People alive. We would also like to recognize the ongoing sacrifices and stewardship efforts of Teslin Tlingit Citizens, as well as the difficult decisions our General Council must make for our people. Your support and actions have made a collective difference in conservation efforts, particularly in communicating the severity of the situation to others along the Yukon River. Progress in conservation efforts have and will continue to rely on people along the entire length of the river. These efforts do not go unnoticed.

Finally, thank you to TTC Lands and Resources staff, particularly Gillian Rourke, and to Dennis Zimmerman (Big Fish, Little Fish Consulting) and Kaitlin Wilson for their considerable contributions to the plan review and revision, supporting the development of a Salmon Plan which embodies the Tlingit relationship with salmon and which values culture, tradition, and ecological health above all.

## TTC Salmon Advisory Group



Yeils'ix'i  
Sandy Smarch



Shkúwyêl  
Christopher Fairclough



L'éex'indu.oo  
Isabelle Dewhurst



Daawux'aak  
Roland Gergel



Gastánt'  
Duane Aucoin



Kudagáan  
Madeleine Jackson

## Salmon conservation technical support



Gillian Rourke



James McGrath



Kaitlin Wilson



Dennis Zimmerman,  
*Big Fish, Little Fish  
Consulting*



Peter Mather Photo



TESLIN TLINGIT COUNCIL