

## Natural Resources Department: Land Use Planning Initiative

By Jaime Sanchez, Land Use Planner

Over the last year the CSTC Natural Resources Department has been doing some interesting work in areas of land use planning capacity development and building networks with other First Nations and their organizations. As a brief reminder as to why we are doing this work at CSTC we should look at sections of the 1982 *Carrier and Sekani Declaration and Claim*:

“...in addition to the original ownership, occupancy and use, we have exercised jurisdiction as a sovereign people over the said lands since time immemorial...said lands have never been surrendered by our people through conquest, treaty or any other legal means to the British Crown or to its colonial governments...and...much of the said lands is, without our consent, now occupied and its resources used by peoples not indigenous to our lands...”

In 2005 the CSTC Natural Resources Department and member First Nations of the CSTC created the Draft CSTC Land Use Vision with an important guiding statement:

“Take care of the land, and the land will take care of you”

Land use planning has continued to be in the spotlight around BC, especially with the limited treaty decisions going on at most negotiating tables. Several First Nations around BC have been reaching land use planning agreements with BC including the Squamish and Taku River Tlingit.

During the summer of 2007 the CSTC Land Use Planning Initiative sent 9 community members and staff to Victoria, BC for a species at risk conference, professional development workshop and 5-day intensive course. Dr. Richard Hebda, Professor at the University of Victoria and Curator of Botany and Earth History at the Royal BC Museum, and Val Schaefer, Faculty

Coordinator, Uvic Restoration of Natural Systems, instructed a very informative and inspiring course on the *Principles and Concepts of Ecological Restoration*. In light of the mountain pine beetle epidemic, resource extraction and climate change, the Yinka Dene territory has and is being drastically impacted. The need for restoration has never been greater. Participants also got a chance to meet faculty from the Uvic including the famed ethnobotanist Nancy Turner.



L to R: Lisa Hardy (Lheidli), Jeff Ralph (Uvic), Joanna Prince (Nak'azdli), Ron Winser (Tl'azt'en), Angel Ransom (Nak'azdli), Jaime Sanchez (CSTC), Richard Hebda (Uvic), Sandy Grey (Nadleh Whut'en), Albert Raphael (Saik'uz) and Margo French (Takla Lake). Missing from photo, but attended: Patricia Prince (Takla Lake) and Jennifer Mackie (Tl'azt'en).

As soon as our group got back from Victoria, some were off again to attend the 5-week long training program, sponsored by the CSTC, in Aboriginal Environmental Technician (AET). As in 2006, the AET Certificate was offered in Saik'uz territory, and was attended by the following community members:

- Carl Frederick – Lheidli T'enneh
- Lisa Hardy – Lheidli T'enneh
- Elton Louis – Stellat'en
- John Luggi Jr. – Nadleh
- Sean Nome –
- Kirk Nooski – Nadleh
- Jonathan Shearer – Stellat'en
- Christina Sutherland – Nadleh Whut'en
- Christine Charlie – Stellat'en
- Ron Winser – Tl'azt'en

The purpose of providing this training was to increase the skills and capacity of Dakelh community members and staff. Some of these people are now working for their community, industry and/or government. Several people are also continuing their education in university.



Patricia Prince (left) and Margo French (right) enjoying the deck view on the ferry to Victoria.

Over the last year the CSTC Natural Resources Department has also begun the creation of a web-based Geographic Information System (GIS), which is based on a similar system that was developed by the Tsilhqot'in National Government (TNG). The CSTC project is called the Carrier Sekani Geospatial Toolset (CSGT) that was partially funded by the GeoConnections Program from Natural Resources Canada. The purpose of the CSGT was to look at the development of a web-based GIS that would allow CSTC and its member First Nations to have a tool for land use planning. GeoBorealis (Mr. Scott Emmons and Mr. Alim Karim) were hired by CSTC to develop the CSGT using Open Source technology. In February and March 2008 the CSTC hosted training sessions at UNBC to introduce community staff to the CSGT and basic principles of GIS and mapping. Over the next year the CSTC will continue with implementing the system at CSTC and in all the CSTC member First Nation communities. For more information visit the CSTC website ([www.cstc.bc.ca](http://www.cstc.bc.ca)) and follow the links under Natural Resources on the left hand column.

The CSTC Land Use Planning Initiative has been made possible from funding from the Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC),

BC Capacity Initiative Program. This work has been building upon the work done at CSTC over the last 3 years, and continues to work towards the creation of a strategic regional land use plan for the combined territories of the CSTC member First Nations. These funds have been used to hire staff, including a GIS Analyst (Ms. Marlene Flannery), Land Use Planning Coordinator (Mr. Jaime Sanchez), Land Use Analyst (Mr. Russell Collier) and Forester (Mr. Paul Blom). In addition, the CSTC has been able to travel to the CSTC communities to provide additional support and coordinate all the efforts each of the member Nations are doing in land use planning for their territories. The CSTC now has the infrastructure for a centralized mapping service, which includes GPS units, several computers, policy related to mapping and information management, and a web server to support the CSGT. Please contact CSTC for more information.



Referrals Forum held in Sept. 2007 in Prince George. Over 70 First Nations from around BC attended.

Through the work CSTC has been doing on the CSGT, links were made with other First Nations and their organizations like the First Nations Technology Council (FNTC). In collaboration with the FNTC, the CSTC hosted a 2 day forum in Prince George in September 2007 to bring together various First Nations from around BC to discuss the information management systems and policies they have with dealing with the referrals First Nations receive from the BC government. (For those of you that do not know what a referral is and why First Nations get them, read the summary below.). The Referrals Forum was chaired by Leonard Thomas, President of the First Nations Forestry Council and former Chief of Nak'azdli, and attended by over 70 First Nations from around BC. Everyone got an opportunity to learn about the different systems and

strategies that First Nations have with dealing with referrals and land use planning information management. It became very obvious that First Nations are creating innovative software, policies and systems to manage this information. It also highlighted the need for First Nations to continuing pressuring the BC government to changing its referrals process, which forms an inadequate form of consultation with First Nations; we are being inundated with paperwork without being properly funded or compensated.



This report is available on the CSTC website under News, Events and Links section.

The CSTC along with its member First Nations, as well as other First Nation across BC frequently get letters from the BC government, through FrontCounterBC, Ministry of Forests and other ministries, asking First Nations what their interests are in proposed projects such as the sale of Crown land, transfer of licenses, tenures, etc. These letters are known as ‘referral’ letters. Since CSTC member First Nations and many other First Nations around BC have never ceded their rights or title to their lands, there exists a dual land ownership issue in

BC. Treaty negotiations are part of the long term solution to resolving the uncertainty of who owns the land in BC. Many First Nations have turned to the courts to bring their claims and protection of their rights from infringements and development in their territories. The CSTC has created several resources available to its member First Nations regarding how to deal with referrals, and other consultation processes.

Some of the other things that the CSTC Natural Resources department has worked on in the spring of 2007 was emergency planning during the flooding of the Nechako and other rivers in the region. Representatives from CSTC, INAC, Provincial Emergency Program (PEP) and the First Nations Emergency Services Society (FNESS) visited most of the impacted CSTC First Nations during the spring 2007 flooding. While some of the communities had emergency plans in place, many did not. Besides flooding, all the CSTC communities and non-aboriginal communities face various forms of potential threats in areas of forest fires, hazardous materials spills and storms; the heavy snowfall in the winter of 2006 greatly impacted many of the CSTC communities, resulting in road closures, power outages, and damage to homes, smoke huts and other infrastructure. More work needs to be done in the area of emergency planning in the CSTC communities, especially in linking with the work that the PEP, FNESS and the Regional District of Bulkley Nechako do during times of emergencies.

The CSTC Land Use Planning initiative is a long term process of organizing information, monitoring what is happening on the land and building relationships with other communities that are learning about First Nations rights, culture and history. In the coming year CSTC staff will be visiting the communities to work on implementing the web GIS (CSGT), decision-making for land use planning and strategies for developing member Nations own land use plans. Each community has done a lot of good work that informs their own land use plans, as well as the collective, regional plan. All of this will continue to build capacity, self-governance and promote Yinka Whut’enne culture, language and rights. ~Mussi