November 22, 2025

huu ay aht
ANCIENT SPIRIT, MODERN MIND

Huu-ay-aht Youth Swiftwater training leads to participation in Huu-ay-aht Fisheries initiatives.

A Swiftwater Rescue Technician course that took place in Nanaimo, Sunday October 20 to Tuesday October 22, 2025, involved Daniel Zayonc, Stewardship Program Advisor, alongside Huu-ay-aht youths Victoria Williams, Vanessa Young, Zyliss Dick, and Seth Nookemus. The Guardians and Fisheries technicians use this valuable training for their work along rivers and streams to protect hikers and steward salmon.



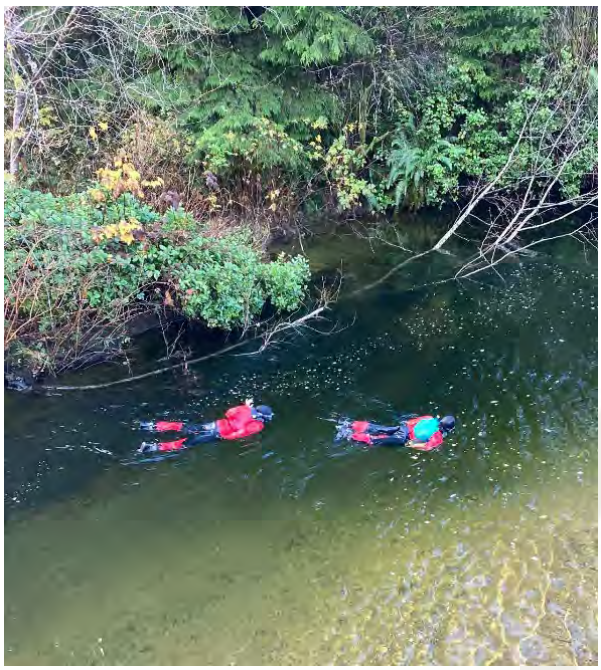
(Left to right) Victoria Williams, Vanessa Young, Zyliss Dick, and Seth Nookemus in Swiftwater training gear. Photo by Daniel Zayonc

Swiftwater Training for Huu-ay-aht Youth provided valuable field skills and work experience, and the training has benefited the Huu-ay-aht First Nations (HFN) Fisheries team by assisting in obtaining counts of salmon in many river systems throughout the territory including Sarita, Sugsaw, Pachena, Klanawa, Rousseau, and Fredrick. Estimating returning salmon in the Sarita River gives feasibility to the Sarita River Economic Fishery. Monitoring these watersheds in the fall is one of the most important aspects of the ongoing stewardship and rehabilitation efforts taking place within the territory.



Youth helping seine Chinook Salmon at Sarita River.

Link here to learn more about the Sarita River Economic Fishery.



Vanessa Young and Victoria Williams swam in the Rosseau River to count Coho salmon for the Huu-ay-aht Fisheries. Photo by Clifford Nookemus



Vanessa Young, Scott Cheyne, Seth Nookemus and Zyliss Dick counting Fish at Sarita Falls.
Photo by Clifford Nookemus

In early November, Chum salmon were harvested by seine net at the mouth of Sugsaw Creek for brood stock. The Sugsaw Hatchery is located at the mouth of the creek.



Sugsaw Hatchery, November 2025



Tom Joe and Vanessa Young harvesting eggs from Chum salmon.



Eggs were harvested from the females (left) and fertilized with milt extracted from the males (right). The fish are then dispatched and saved for smoking.



Left: The eggs and milt are mixed for about 1 minute, then the eggs, which are now fertilized, are rinsed thoroughly to remove excess milt. (Scott Cheyne)



Right: The fertilized eggs are incubated until hatching in trays with flowing water, simulating the river flow eggs would normally experience. (Abigail Andiel)





The adult fish are measured for length (left), and scale and tissue clips are sampled for subsequent analyses by DFO (right), to estimate the genetic diversity of the Sugsaw Chum salmon population. (Clifford Nookemus and Abigail Andiel).



Meanwhile, Victoria Williams and Tom Joe walk up Sugsaw Creek to count Chum salmon swimming upstream to estimate the number of returning spawning pairs.



Shawn Mack and smokehouse in Lower Anacla



Chum salmon being smoked with Alder.

The Chum used for breeding do not go to waste – and according to Shawn Mack, Chum makes the best smoked salmon!

Photos by Heather Alexander

Natural Salmon cycle vs Hatchery Salmon cycle
(from Island Fisherman magazine)

