

2019 Environmental Stewardship Initiative Technical Conference



Gitanyow Hereditary Chief Simogyet Malii (Glen Williams), Honourable George Heyman (Minister of Environment and Climate Change Strategy), and ESI facilitator, Dan George, celebrate a successful launch of the ESI Technical Conference.

The Environmental Stewardship Initiative (ESI) team would like to take this opportunity to celebrate the Ministries of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation, Energy, Mines and Petroleum Resources, Forests, Lands, Natural Resource Operations and Rural Development, and Environment and Climate Change Strategy staff who contributed to the success of the inaugural ESI Technical Conference, which was held from November 13-15 in Vancouver, B.C. in the traditional territories of the Musqueam, Squamish, and Tsleil-Waututh First Nations. This event provided an opportunity for government and partner Nations to connect, celebrate successes, discuss challenges, and contemplate strategic opportunities and next steps. The Conference highlighted knowledge transfer between regional forums through project team presentations, and shared learning through issue and skill-driven breakout sessions, led by subject matter experts. Key provincial speakers included Minister Heyman, Deputy Minister Doug Caul, and Assistant Deputy Minister Simon Coley.

While this gathering was organized to promote networking and the cross-pollination of ideas between the four regional forums, it blossomed into something much more as participants forged connections and weaved together their common experiences and hope for future collaborative stewardship work in their regions, including for the continuation of the ESI. Many provincial leaders and First Nation partners echoed sentiments outlining the importance of ESI as tool for effectively promoting reconciliation and

addressing articles of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP). One unexpected and moving moment at the Conference was when Gitxsan, Wet'suwet'en, and Gitanyow hereditary chiefs from the Skeena regional forum delivered a joint statement on stage. They expressed their support for the continuation of the Skeena region's collaborative stewardship work and for ongoing government support for this example of "UNDRIP in action" in Northern B.C. While the successes and impacts of ESI were highlighted throughout the event, a sense of urgency was also communicated about the need for a continued ESI mandate. ESI was identified as an opportunity to work in partnership and its continuation represents a pathway to sustained reconciliation in action.

Through ESI, more than 30 Indigenous First Nations in four collaborative forums across the North are working in partnership with the Province on stewardship projects that support resource management and embrace Indigenous knowledge. These initiatives are a direct response to First Nations' desire to participate as stewards of their territories.

More information about ESI and the projects can be found at the following website:

<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/environment/natural-resource-stewardship/consulting-with-first-nations/environmental-stewardship-initiative>