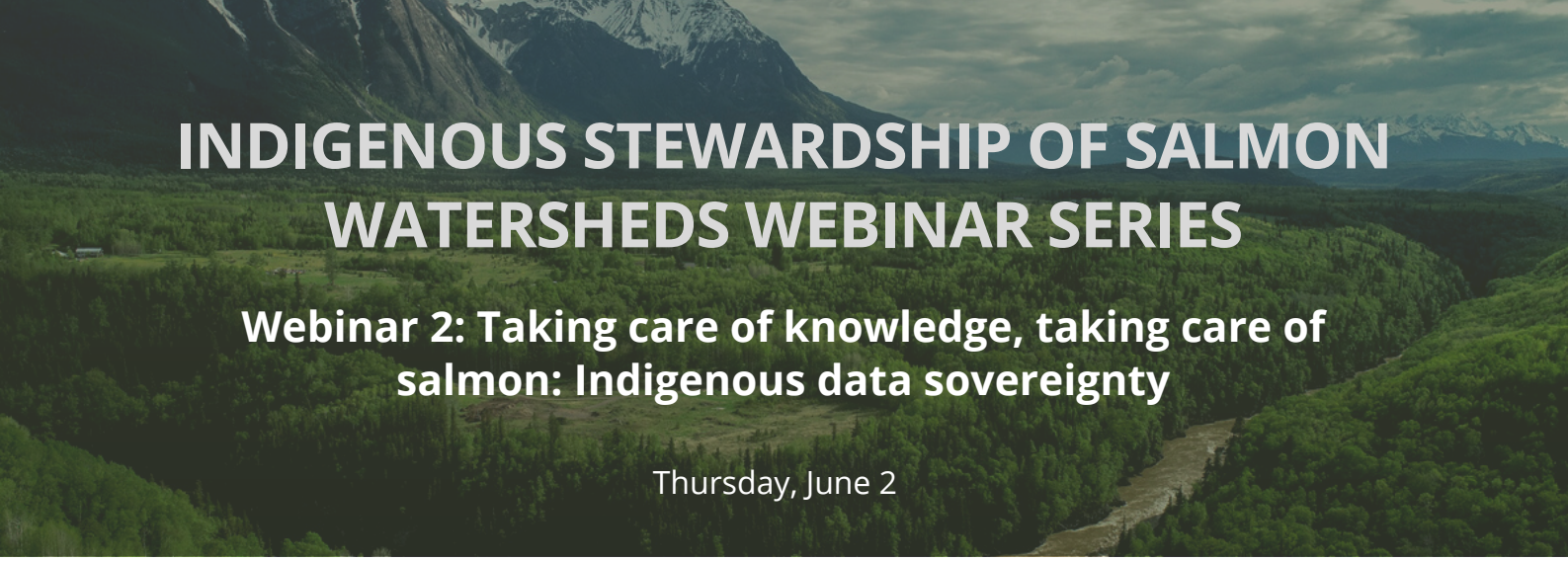


INDIGENOUS STEWARDSHIP OF SALMON WATERSHEDS WEBINAR SERIES

Webinar 2: Taking care of knowledge, taking care of salmon: Indigenous data sovereignty

Thursday, June 2

OBJECTIVES

The overall purpose of the WFI webinar series is to explore Indigenous perspectives on improvements in the governance and management of cumulative effects in BC's salmon-bearing watersheds.

The goal of Webinar #2 is to identify tangible action steps and implementable recommendations for First Nation sovereignty and governance of Indigenous data related to cumulative effects and climate change in salmon-bearing watersheds.

SCOPE & FORMAT

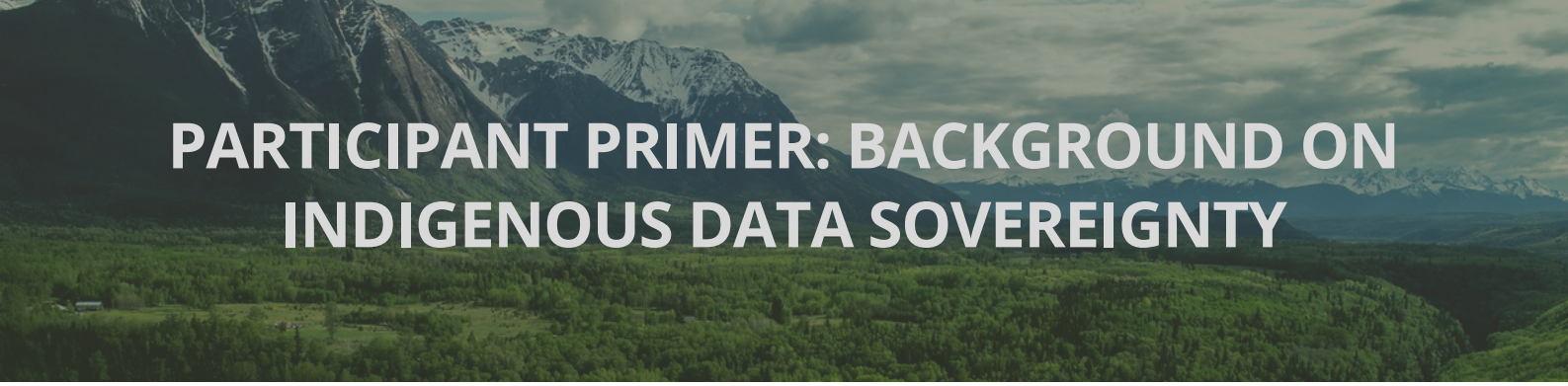
This webinar will have a similar format to our June 2021 webinar, with short presentations followed by opportunities to exchange information and share first-hand experiences among participants. This second event is also intended to identify opportunities for Indigenous communities and groups to take actionable steps—individually or collectively—to improve the management of cumulative effects in BC's salmon watersheds, and generate recommendations for collaborators seeking to support Indigenous Peoples and groups on this journey.

This webinar is **not** intended as a forum for:

- An examination of the science of climate change or the modelling of impacts in BC;
- Detailed, quantitative assessment of cumulative effects in any one salmon watershed or across BC's entire salmon ecosystem;
- A systematic evaluation of current strategies for managing impacts to salmon watersheds; or,
- Discussion of funding opportunities for community-based efforts to tackle cumulative effects.

This webinar series is being designed by a Planning Committee composed of leading Indigenous practitioners, managers and academics, including the webinar Chair Stu Barnes, Chair of the Skeena Fisheries Commission; Bob ('Galagame') Chamberlin, Planning Committee Chair and Chairman of the First Nation Wild Salmon Alliance; Andrea Reid, Assistant Professor and Principal Investigator for the Centre for Indigenous Fisheries, University of British Columbia; and Jennifer Walkus, Wuikinukwv Tribal Councilor.

Planning support and technical assistance for the webinars has been provided by members of the Coordination Team of the Watershed Futures Initiative (WFI): Jonathan Moore, Nigel Sainsbury, Sara Cannon, Julian Griggs, and Emma Griggs. The Watershed Futures Initiative is a collaborative initiative that will undertake and coordinate research on cumulative effects in British Columbia's salmon-bearing watersheds, initiate dialogue among researchers, practitioners, and policy-makers, and share emerging results via webinars and workshops.



PARTICIPANT PRIMER: BACKGROUND ON INDIGENOUS DATA SOVEREIGNTY

Indigenous knowledge is invaluable and irreplaceable. Indigenous knowledge systems encompass experiences and insights from thousands of generations of those who have taken care of their lands and waters. Indigenous knowledge systems encode cultural worldviews and offer protocols and guidance for appropriate behaviour. Indigenous knowledge also includes scientific observations, often referred to as data, made by Indigenous Peoples in traditional and contemporary territories.

> *"Information, data, and research about our peoples —collected about us, with us, or by us—belong to us and must be cared for by us."*
>
> *- Liz La quen náay Kat Saas Medicine Crow*

Knowledge about salmon systems has been held and passed down through generations by First Nations Peoples in BC. That knowledge has been used to sustainably steward salmon systems for millennia. Compiling, managing, and using Indigenous knowledge is therefore a critical ingredient for Indigenous Peoples re-establishing control of salmon watersheds in their traditional and contemporary territories.

WHAT IS INDIGENOUS DATA?

For this webinar, we define Indigenous data relating to salmon watersheds as 'Indigenous cultural heritage embedded in languages, knowledge, practices, technologies, natural resources, and territories, and data collected by a Nation themselves or other governments and institutions, about salmon systems in the Nation's territories'*. Common examples of Indigenous data relating to salmon watersheds might include: Indigenous knowledge passed down through generations; salmon counts carried out by Indigenous fisheries experts; and freshwater environmental data measured by Indigenous technicians and scientists.

**Adapted from the broader definition provided by Indigenous Data in Global Indigenous Data Alliance, 2022*

It is important to acknowledge that data is intertwined with colonization. Non-Indigenous people have stolen, ignored, collected without consent, and mis-interpreted Indigenous knowledge in many ways that have negatively impacted First Nations in BC. For example, non-Indigenous researchers have visited Indigenous communities to collect data from people and traditional territories for their own benefit without permission or reciprocity. Indigenous data collected by non-Indigenous actors has been used selectively in natural resource management decisions in which Indigenous expertise and voices are excluded. Environmental assessment data has been collected on behalf of industrial proponents, treated as proprietary, and used to justify project approval. These acts have been perpetrated by a range of groups, including from governments, academia, and the private sector. At the same time, knowledge held by Indigenous Peoples themselves about salmon and their own watersheds has been de-valued and ignored.

In recent years, there has been growing interest within the scientific community and among governments in the idea of free data sharing, or "open data". While this movement is made with the goal of increasing scientific integrity and learning, this development may lead to even greater pressure on First Nations to share their knowledge, which may not be aligned with their rights and interests.

Despite these challenges and trends, it has been increasingly recognized that Indigenous Peoples must retain the right to exercise ownership over Indigenous data and that this is vital to enable First Nation's to achieve sovereignty and self-determinism (such as by following OCAP® Principles – discussed below). Current efforts by the BC government to advance reconciliation, including major initiatives such as collaborative stewardship and modernized land use planning, reflect a renewed commitment to co-development of planning and management approaches, and an acknowledgement of the importance of Indigenous data. Environmental policies such as the Fisheries Act are increasingly calling for the involvement of Indigenous Peoples and their expertise in decision-making.

Ownership and control of Indigenous data can enable Nations to exercise their decision-making authority gained through new co-development and co-management arrangements with the Province. For that reason, there is a need and opportunity for First Nations to articulate their policies towards Indigenous data, and identify practical tools and processes to govern what, how and why Indigenous data is collected, stored, controlled, accessed, and used.

There are many positive examples of new approaches for the collection, management, and use of Indigenous data in ways that benefit Indigenous Peoples. Most promising of all are the examples that move beyond an 'extract with consent' model and advance beyond well-intentioned but limited Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) strategies. For example, frameworks have been developed to support Indigenous Peoples in governing their data. The FNIGC (First Nations Information and Governance Centre) established the principles of Ownership, Control, Access, and Possession (OCAP) of Indigenous data, which assert that First Nations should have control over how Indigenous data is collected, and define how that information can be used. The Global Indigenous Data Alliance's CARE principles (Collective benefit, Authority to control, Responsibility and Ethics) also seek to help Indigenous Peoples around the world to govern their data in an "open data" world.

Further work can provide practical guidance for how First Nations could govern their data and how non-Indigenous people should behave in relation to Indigenous data. This is particularly challenging for those working in BC's salmon watersheds, given the complexity of salmon life stages and habitat, the many diverse ecosystems and jurisdictions within BC, the cumulative effects of multiple activities, and the uncertainties related to a changing climate.

The WFI webinar will tackle these issues, asking the question: "How can First Nations effectively advance the governance, authority, and impact of Indigenous data related to salmon watersheds in BC?"