



Semá:th (Sumas) First Nation
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SUMAS FIRST NATION ANNOUNCES COLLABORATIVE BOOK PROJECT ON THE ANNIVERSARY OF THE 2021 ATMOSPHERIC RIVER EVENT

Semá:th Territory, Abbotsford, BC, November 15th, 2024 – Semá:th (Sumas) First Nation is pleased to announce that they have invited Dr. Keith Carlson to work with their Elders and Knowledge Keepers to research and produce a book that will chronicle the rich history, cultural resurgence, and reconciliation journey of the Semá:th people. Research and analysis will be conducted throughout the coming year. This collaborative project will be informed by voices from the broader Stó:lō community, exploring the Indigenous perspectives and unique storytelling traditions of the Semá:th and their neighbours. More than simply a historical account, this aims to tell a complicated and sometimes tragic story of the past in a way that fosters mutual respect and understanding between the Semá:th and the newcomers who have arrived in their territory.

In the spirit of the Semá:th peoples' enduring commitment to the land, this book will explore a vision of cultural revival, reconciliation, and land stewardship for generations to come. The history of Semá:th Xó:t̓sa (Sumas Lake) is a central chapter in the history of the Semá:th people, deeply shaping their way of life until the lake's draining was completed in 1924. Today's press release commemorates this historic event and the 2021 atmospheric river event.

The Semá:th people's vision for this work highlights their deep ties to the former lake, the impacts associated with the draining of the lake, settler colonialism, and the current environmental and economic challenges that the land now poses. Environmental protection and food sovereignty continue to be key elements as we identify ways to pave a path to healing that is rooted in unity.

The transformation of Sumas Lake and the profound ecological and cultural impacts that followed will serve as a powerful reminder that true reconciliation requires honest truth-telling. For this book project with Dr. Carlson, the Semá:th people seek to tell a story that they hope will help lay the foundations for a future of shared stewardship between Indigenous and settler communities.

Previous collaboration with [UFV's Peace and Reconciliation Centre](#) through the [2024 BMO Collaboratorium](#) (created by Dr. Carlson) led to the creation and maintenance of the Semá:th Xó:t̓sa Database, a repository of historical records related to Semá:th First Nation, Semá:th Xó:t̓sa, and related/relevant information regarding the surrounding land and First Nations peoples. This growing database will be a critical resource used to inform and bolster the research efforts necessary for completing this project. This will also be a legacy project that the Semá:th community will be able to use for a wide range of future projects. We are fortunate to maintain a



friendship and partnership with University of the Fraser Valley (UFV) as we continue to explore meaningful methods of preserving and communicating the history of Semá:th First Nation.

Semá:th First Nation looks forward to the commencement of this important collaborative work, which goes beyond a historical record to serve as a call to action. Through this book project, Dr. Carlson and the Semá:th community will work together to take an important step forward, encouraging communities, organizations, and government bodies to unite in mutual respect and shared responsibility for a future rooted in Indigenous resurgence and Indigenous-settler reconciliation.

S'ólh téméxw te íkw'elò. Xólhmet temekw' stám ít kwelát. This is our land. We must look after everything that belongs to us. This work not only helps us connect as an Indigenous community but with our neighbouring communities and stakeholders as well. Sumas First Nation is a robust Indigenous Community located near Abbotsford, BC. Sumas has approximately 350 members and currently resides on a reserve land of approximately 600 acres.

Lets'emó:t - One Heart, One Mind

Learn More:

To learn more about Semá:th (Sumas) First Nation, visit: <https://sumasfirstnation.com/>

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