



## NEWS RELEASE

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### **ʔAkisq̓nuḱ First Nation Advancing Evidence-Based Water Stewardship**

INVERMERE, B.C. - ʔAkisq̓nuḱ First Nation (AFN) is continuing to advance a comprehensive, evidence-based approach to water stewardship on ʔamakʔis Ktunaxa, including Columbia Lake and Lake Windermere.

As a witness to the serious consequences of unchecked demands and pollution on the health of the lakes and associated biota, AFN is tackling the issue head on with a holistic approach grounded in environmental science, regional collaboration and AFN's longstanding stewardship responsibilities.

AFN Council has approved more than \$200,000 to conduct bathymetric mapping of both lakes. The work will collect measurable data on lake depth and help us better understand sediment movement and shoreline conditions to fill gaps in data, support informed decision-making, and clear up misinformation being reported by some groups.

AFN is also commissioning a labour market survey to better understand the impact of recreational use of the lakes, including ballasted boat use, on the regional economy. Assertions that lake conditions, wake impacts, or boating activity are unknowable are incorrect. These are measurable environmental conditions, and AFN is investing significant resources to ensure decisions affecting the lakes are based on credible data, technical expertise, traditional ecological knowledge and long-term ecological sustainability rather than assumptions, hypotheticals, or speculation.

AFN's stewardship initiatives include ongoing engagement with the District of Invermere, the Regional District of East Kootenay and neighbouring Indigenous communities, including the Shuswap Band. Water stewardship has been identified as a strategic priority in AFN's annual planning processes, demonstrating AFN's ongoing commitment to protecting culturally and environmentally significant waters for future generations.

AFN will continue engaging with regulatory agencies, local governments, residents, and lake users as technical work progresses and additional information becomes available.

**QUOTE:**

**Chief Donald Sam** - *“AFN is committed to working government to government with Province and Federal governments to protect our homelands. Our people have stewarded these lands and waters continuously for more than ten thousand years. ʔakxamìs qàpi qapsins refers to our original relationships to "all living things". While colonization disrupted our ability to fully exercise those rights, it did not erase our responsibility to protect these waters. We will continue to lead with credible science, respectful collaboration, traditional ecological knowledge and evidence-based stewardship that reflects our obligations to future generations.”*

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