

## Championing Water Stewardship: Indigenous Youth Leader Trinda Cote Leads the Way

In this edition, we embark on an exploration of the thoughtful efforts spearheaded by Indigenous Youth Ambassador, Trinda Cote in the realm of water stewardship for Living Lakes Canada. This BC-rooted organization is a charitable water stewardship NGO working with community groups to protect freshwater.



Trinda Cote pictured at Generation8 Nativigation8 Gathering.

Trinda is connected to Secwepemc and Ktunaxa Nations in the east Kootenays. Growing up in her ancestral territories, living and being a part of the land and water. Trinda has learned from an early age the inseparable connection her peoples have to the land. Particularly, the Secwepemc, known as the salmon people, speak to Indigenous peoples' life-sustaining relationship with water. The roles of water, land, and Indigenous people are deeply interconnected. Indigenous peoples steward the land to ensure the health of all human and non-human relations. Caring for this delicate balance includes water stewardship and is a responsibility of all. Trinda has used her position to champion water stewardship and uphold the sacredness of these life-sustaining ecosystems by raising awareness and mobilizing others to safeguard water resources. Drawing on her culture, Trinda has

shared an important indigenous lens to water stewardship connected to the Secwepemc language, stories, and teachings related to our current world with climate change, conservation, and water stewardship. One example of her work is her role in publishing the Living Lakes blog post, The Youth Perspective: A watershed victory for the Grizzly Bear Spirit.

As a youth ambassador, Trinda has had the opportunity to learn and be a part of the message of collective water stewardship, including engaging with the broader community across Turtle Island at the Changing Currents: Tribal Water summit in Oregon hosted by the Affiliated Tribes of Northwest Indians.

Central to advocacy is recognizing the invaluable contributions of Indigenous knowledge in shaping sustainable water management practices. Trinda firmly believes communities can forge holistic solutions to address water-related challenges by honouring and integrating traditional teaching with Western science approaches. Collaborative efforts can connect everyone for the sustainability of life for human and non-human relations.



Digital art produced by Trinda Cote.

*"Water can be used as a tool of reconciliation because it's such an important part of all life and being able to kind of use that to create positive outcomes and really connect these different Indigenous tribes, groups, and bands."*

In offering guidance to fellow First Nations youth embarking on the journey of water stewardship, Trinda suggests that youth connect locally with bands, communities, and local organizations to support their interest in water stewardship. She emphasizes the need for young leaders to uphold

Indigenous ways of knowing and teachings as powerful assets for positive change within and affecting their communities.

As we celebrate the unwavering commitment and passion of youth leaders like Trinda Cote, let us continue to rally behind and support their efforts in championing the cause of water stewardship. For further insights and opportunities to engage with Trinda Cote, please reach out at [trinda.cote@gmail.com](mailto:trinda.cote@gmail.com).