



Al Martin HCTF Conservation Scholarship Recipient 2025



Olivier Jumeau

Olivier Jumeau is a master's student at Thompson Rivers University with a strong interest in animal-wildfire relationships. His master's thesis looks at the post-fire recovery of caribou habitat in Ulkatcho territory, west-central British Columbia. For his research, he is working closely with the Ulkatcho First Nation to investigate how long after a wildfire it takes for suitable caribou habitat to recover. He is also looking at how fire influences the availability of forage for black bear, grizzly bear, moose and caribou in Ulkatcho territory.

The Ulkatcho people have a long history of living alongside woodland caribou, known as whudzih. While Elders remember hunting them in large numbers and sharing the meat within the community, all four herds in Ulkatcho are now in long-term decline and are listed as threatened. A significant portion of their habitat has been lost to wildfires, with 32% burning between 2000 and 2023. During winter, mature lodgepole pine stands are crucial for providing the caribou with lichen forage, which is essential for their survival.

Olivier's research, conducted in collaboration with the Ulkatcho First Nation, aims to understand how long it takes for caribou habitat to recover after a wildfire. Traditional ecological knowledge, often overlooked in caribou research, is integrated into this study. His research combines Ulkatcho oral history, Dakelh linguistics, and caribou-centric plots to better understand post-fire habitat. It also takes a holistic approach by assessing both lichen and stand structure recovery, which may help caribou detect predators like wolves and mountain lions.

As wildfires continue to change the landscape in Ulkatcho and British Columbia, Olivier's study provides essential baseline information for managing post-fire caribou habitat. The findings will directly inform indigenous management practices and supplement existing knowledge on this symbolic and threatened species. The goal is to support the recovery and preservation of woodland caribou in the region.

Preceding his start to his Master's, he studied the impacts of Nordic ski-hill development on black bear summer diet at Sun Peaks. When he isn't biking up to Sun Peaks to collect bear scat, he is swimming, collecting conifer cones, and Nordic skiing in the winter. During the school year, he plays goalkeeper for TRU Wolfpack Men's soccer, for which he was part of the infamous 2022 U-Sports National Championship victory.



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