

Together for Wildlife

Together for Wildlife HCTF Conservation Scholarship

Recipient 2026



Daphnee Tuzlak

Daphnee Tuzlak (she/her) is a PhD student in the Resource and Environmental Management program at Simon Fraser University studying under the supervision of Dr. Shawn Chartrand and Dr. Chelsey Armstrong. Daphnee has spent the last five years working as a fluvial geomorphologist to support innovative watershed restoration work with Redd Fish Restoration Society and several Indigenous communities on the West Coast of Vancouver Island. She is interested in building a resilient and equitable future from the ground up by conducting community-based research and supporting Indigenous-led conservation and stewardship.

Overall, Daphnee's research asks: to what extent have long-term (millennial-scale) Indigenous land-use practices influenced terrestrial and freshwater ecosystems? Humans have influenced landscapes for thousands of years, but their role in shaping ecosystems is often overlooked, which limits the development of effective land management and restoration strategies. In partnership with Gitxsan Wilps 'Wii K'aax, Daphnee is conducting a multi-disciplinary field-based study to develop a landscape history model that integrates Indigenous environmental management into our understanding of terrestrial and freshwater ecosystems.

To achieve these goals, Daphnee will analyze the biophysical patterns of the lower Sustut River and evaluate how people have shaped these "natural" systems over thousands of years. She will conduct geomorphic mapping, optically stimulated luminescence dating, and drone lidar surveys to assess the geomorphic conditions of the river valley. Then, she will connect these datasets with ecological and archaeological data and Gitxsan histories, developing a landscape history model that integrates Indigenous management into our understanding of terrestrial and freshwater ecosystems.

Daphnee's research will support 'Wii K'aax in developing an Indigenous-led approach to shaping both restoration and conservation in an Indigenous Protected Area. Innovative habitat stewardship practices are needed to enhance and restore priority wildlife habitats. Findings from this work will identify culturally modified landscapes and areas of high ecological resilience that will support conservation planning. Indigenous land management practices such as cultural burning are understood to promote biodiversity and improve wildlife habitats, but without ongoing management the ecological benefits of these practices diminish. This research has been co-designed with the community with the goal of reestablishing Indigenous land management practices moving forward.



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