



Williams Lake
FIRST NATION

For Immediate Release

Sept. 15, 2023

Sugar Cane Archaeology Wins Indigenous Business Award

Williams Lake, BC

On September 12, 2023, Sugar Cane Archaeology was announced by the BC Achievement Foundation as the recipient an Indigenous Business Award under the category of *Community-owned Business of the Year*. Sugar Cane Archaeology, wholly owned by Williams Lake First Nation (WLFN), first began operations in 2016. It is a pioneering First Nations enterprise led by a dedicated team of project managers, archaeologists, and natural resource experts. The company specializes in heritage management and natural resource stewardship in British Columbia, with a distinct focus on responsible industry practices.

We are excited to win this award because it proves what we have been saying all along – First Nations are the rightful stewards of the land and its resources. In the Province of British Columbia, First Nations have historically been sidelined in the management of their cultural heritage by colonial legislation and the dominance of non-local archaeological consulting companies. Receiving this award shows not only that First Nations are at the table, but that these nations are succeeding, and driving real change within the traditional territory and beyond. We look forward to building on our current momentum while promoting ethical and sustainable resource stewardship that is grounded in both western science and Indigenous community values.

Sugar Cane Archaeology Manager and Archaeologist, Brittany Cleminson.

Two notable large-scale projects helped put the company on the map in their early days: the 4-laning of Highway 97 through Williams Lake First Nation's IR#1, and remediation of the 2017 wildfires in the Central Cariboo. While it is of critical importance to Sugar Cane Archaeology and WLFN to be involved in large-scale ground-disturbing operations like these within WLFN territory, the passion for the team lies more within projects focused on fostering stewardship opportunities for WLFN and other Indigenous communities.

Cleminson continues "To us, archaeology is one of the ways forward to true reconciliation. It could be economic reconciliation, social reconciliation, political reconciliation – people think it's just about the past, but it's about the community *now*, and about the *future* of the community. It's about looking for

the best way forward to make sure that all cultural resources are taken care of in a good way and protected for future generations.

Sugar Cane Archaeology has completed pioneering archaeological inventory surveys of the Fraser River, Quesnel Lake, and the Bowron Lakes. What makes projects like these significant to the Sugar Cane Arch team is that they are not just a small piece of some larger industrial project; they are purely for the sake of exploration and enlightenment, to take stock of the rich cultural heritage attached to the lands, and to affirm Title and Rights for a First Nation within a territory. Sites recorded during such surveys are often used to inform subsequent land claim cases launched by First Nations.

One project that did just that was a multi-year collaboration with Northern Secwepemc te Qelmuw (NStQ), performing an archaeological inventory survey on behalf of Stswecem'c Xget'tem First Nation, Canim Lake Band, Xat'sūll First Nation and WLFN between 2018 and 2021. Cleminson notes, "that's one of our proudest projects because we've always believed that while we are a WLFN-owned enterprise, what we *really* are is an Indigenous company doing archaeology. We want to grow, support, and build capacity *together* with other nations. It is the First Nations who should be doing the work on the land."

Media Contact:

Steffi Fischer

Administrative Assistant

Office: (778) 417-0079

Email: steffi.fischer@sugarcanearch.ca

cc: brittany.cleminson@wlfn.ca