

April 9, 2015

AASHE STARS Committee
Camosun College
Victoria, BC

Dear AASHE STARS Committee:

The Annual Coast Salish Pit Cook (since 2008) is part of the ongoing Indigenization Initiative at the Camosun College. The pit cook is well-attended and has brought members of local Aboriginal communities, Camosun employees and students together to participate in a traditional method of cooking and sharing food. Over the years the pit cook has drawn hundreds of people together and has been enjoyed by students and faculty from the University of Victoria, students from the University of Gastronomic Sciences in Italy, faculty from Royal Roads University, several elementary schools, and the Camosun Day Care. We are the only educational institution that has been hosting such an event on an annual basis, and we are honoured to provide this unique opportunity for the communities involved.

Eyē? Sqā'lewen Centre for Indigenous Education & Community Connections is pleased to work in partnership with Cheryl Bryce (former Lands Manager for the Songhees First Nation) as Lansdowne Campus rests on her family's traditional land. The themes of the pit cook focus on the cultural, nutritional, and economic importance of camas to the Lkwungen people, our connection to the land, traditional plant use, sustainability, food sovereignty and ecosystem restoration. Activities have included traditional teas harvested locally and prepared by Native plant medicine specialists, salmon barbecued on sticks by an open fire, plant walks, invasive species removal, planting native grasses, cedar bark weaving, storytelling, singing, drumming & dancing.

Na'tsa'maht, our gathering place, is the perfect arbor-like setting providing space for activities and, when necessary, added shelter from the wind and rain. The Native Plant Garden that surrounds Na'tsa'maht provides participants an opportunity to see 44 plant species that were used as medicine, food and for technology by the Lkwungen & W'SANEC peoples.

Events like the Annual Coast Salish Pit Cook demonstrate a kind of "innovation in tradition" and are critical for highlighting local Indigenous traditions that have sustainability at their core, for creating harmony in our relationships with one another and these territories, and for sharing the gifts the land provides to us all.

Sincerely,



Corrine Michel (Secwepemc), Indigenization Coordinator