

CONSERVATION

BC MÉTIS FEDERATION | SUMMER 2025



As we wrap up another vibrant and memorable **summer (l'itii) season (sayzoon)**, the Conservation Department would **like (koom)** to share our gratitude with all of you – our members, volunteers, partners, and community supporters.


Looking back, this **summer (l'itii)** offered so many moments to enjoy simple **joys (zhway)** with **friends (lii zaamii)** and **family (faamii)**. Whether it was a peaceful **walk (maarsh)** on a **forest (bwaa) trail (pchi shmayn)**, a **warm (fay shoo) day (zhoor)** at the **beach (plage)**, or a quiet **night (swayr)** listening to waves on the shore, these shared experiences remind us why caring for our environment matters. Each **memory (mimwayr)** from this **season (sayzoon)** reflects the strength of our communities and our deep connection to the natural world around us.

As we move into the next **season (sayzoon)**, we carry these moments with us, along with renewed energy for the important conservation **work (oovraazh)** ahead. Thank you for being part of this journey, and for continuing to **walk (maarsh)** alongside us as we protect, learn from, and celebrate the lands and waters we all share.

WILDFIRE

SEASON RECAP





British Columbia entered summer 2025 with lingering drought and “overwintering” fire risks in the northeast, after two severe fire years (2023–2024). Provincial wildfire planners warned in June that heat, low snowpack, and drought would elevate risk through peak season.

By early May, B.C. already had multiple active fires in the northeast (Fort St. John / Dawson Creek area), prompting short-notice evacuations as winds and unseasonable warmth arrived. Activity surged again in late summer as heat returned. In early September, satellites captured dense smoke plumes over the Cariboo as several large fires burned out of control, a signature image of the season’s late push.

By mid-September, reporting placed B.C.’s burned area above the long-term average, with ~840,000+ hectares scorched—well below the record 2.9 million hectares of 2023, but still a heavy year (2021: ~869,000 ha). A national roll-up around the same time listed ~879,000 hectares for B.C., illustrating how totals fluctuated as fires evolved. (Differences reflect reporting cut-off dates.)

As heat and fire activity peaked, Metro Vancouver and parts of the South Coast reached “10+” (Very High) on the Air Quality Health Index on Sept. 3, triggering health warnings for smoke exposure. Provincial and Metro Vancouver air advisories emphasized reducing outdoor activity during the worst episodes.

Weather backdrop. Early September also brought record-setting heat in B.C. (Ashcroft 40.8 °C on Sept. 4), compounding dryness and smoke production—consistent with the seasonal outlook that warned of hotter-drier conditions in parts of the province.

Nationally, 2025 became Canada’s second-worst fire season on record (after 2023), underscoring a new baseline of larger, longer seasons driven by heat, drought, and lightning. While Saskatchewan and Manitoba bore the brunt nationally, B.C.’s totals and smoke impacts remained significant for health and logistics.

The province highlighted expanding cultural and prescribed fire partnerships with First Nations (48 projects implemented in 2024; 88 projects planned for 2025) to reduce fuels and restore healthier fire regimes—an important long-term lever as drought and heat persist.

Overall, the 2025 wildfire season highlighted how quickly conditions in British Columbia can shift from routine to high risk, with heat, drought, and smoke becoming recurring features of summer. While the year did not reach the extremes of recent record seasons, it still placed significant strain on communities and response systems across the province. As B.C. looks ahead, strengthening preparedness, improving resilience, and adapting to a rapidly changing climate will be central to managing the wildfire seasons to come.



Plastics Action Fund



This year, the BC Métis Federation Conservation Department is proud to participate in the CleanBC Plastics Action Fund, an initiative created to reduce plastic waste across the province and support a shift toward long-term, reusable solutions. The program was launched in response to growing concerns about single-use plastics, their impact on land and water ecosystems, and the need for community-driven solutions that promote waste reduction and environmental responsibility. Through this fund, BCMF is working with partner communities to replace disposable items with durable, reusable alternatives that support healthier gatherings and a cleaner future.

Beginning this winter, participating communities will receive dishwashers, along with complete reusable dinnerware and utensil sets, sized to meet the needs of their largest community events. These resources will help reduce plastic waste at meetings, celebrations, and cultural gatherings while promoting sustainable practices rooted in stewardship and care for the land. We look forward to supporting Métis communities in taking meaningful steps toward reducing plastic use and building a more sustainable future for generations to come.



Michel Pablo looks over some of his bison, which were rounded up, sold, and shipped to the Canadian government between 1907 and 1912 (Source: unknown, 1908 Roundup of the Pablo-Allard BuffaloHerd (1908). Montana History Portal.



By the late 1800s, the great buffalo herds of the plains were nearly gone. In Montana, Métis ranchers Michel Pablo and Charles Allard saw what was coming. Pablo, of Blackfoot and Red River Métis roots, and Allard, of Cree and Red River heritage, had both married into the Flathead (Salish Pend d'Oreille) community. Our research shows that many Canadian Metis have kinship on the Flathead reserve. Their families and kinship reached from the prairies of Fort Garry to the mountain valleys of the Flathead and north to Alberta's grasslands. These cross-cultural and kinship alliances across vast distances positioned them uniquely to lead in buffalo conservation efforts.

By 1906, their "Pablo–Allard" herd had grown to about 700 buffalo. When the U.S. government wouldn't buy it, they struck a deal with Canada to protect the animals. Over the next five years, crews of up to 90 riders chased, corralled, and hauled the buffalo north across the rugged country of the Pacific Northwest and plains.

Those buffalo became the foundation of Canada's conservation herds, including Elk Island National Park. Today, many buffalo on the prairies descend from their herd — a lasting sign of the leadership, mobility, and kinship that carried Pablo and Allard's vision across borders and generations. This enterprise not only epitomizes a Métis cross-border initiative (literally moving a resource across the international line), but also stands as an early instance of Metis-led conservation.

Submitted by Research Department

Source: Whyte Museum of the Canadian Rockies. "Pablo–Allard Buffalo Herd: Indigenous-led Conservation." Whyte Museum, July 26, 2023.

