




Peló:qes

Torch season



Peló:qes is torch season. In the late winter, before spring comes, the waters in our rivers and lakes are clear. Our Elders tell us that clear waters are good for torch fishing because you can see the fish and take only what you need, leaving the fish that are on their way to spawn behind.

Lexéywa

A town of lights

Lexéywa means fishing by torch-light. This fishing technique uses fire light to attract the fish. Although most fishermen today use electric lights, fishing at night with lights is still a very popular fishing technique. Many years ago torch fishing was so popular, our Elders said the Chehalis River looked like a town of lights because there were so many canoes torch-lighting. Can you imagine all the glowing lights?

Try this: With a partner imagine yourselves torch-light fishing:

- Are you thinking of the "perfect catch" as you gather wood for your fire?
- What is on your mind as you glide through the water in your canoe?
- How does your paddle sound in the water?
- What does your body look like while you are waiting patiently for a fish, or trying to silently communicate with your partner?
- Our Elders tell us to try it this way:

When you picture yourselves as fishermen, what is on your mind? Think of what you are feeling, not the words you would say



Remembering our Elders:



Mr. Ed Leon shared his fishing stories for the Coqualeetza Cultural Education Centre. Mr. Leon, and many other Elders shared their stories because they wanted kids, moms dads, aunties, uncles, everyone to remember Stó:lō ways and culture. We are grateful to Mr. Leon and all the Elders who took the time to share so that we can learn about the Peló:qes season today.

Fishing by torch-light is special work. For torch-lighting you must:

- Build a good fire in your canoe so you and your partner can see the fish and find your way in the dark.
- Be quiet and stealthy as you move so you don't scare the fish away.
- Be a good communicator - there is no talking when torch-lighting. You must communicate with your partner by watching and using signals.

For torch-lighting, each element of the work has to be done thoughtfully and carefully with a calm body and mind or the fish will be scared away!

Sometimes when we are waiting for the seasons to change we can get anxious or impatient. We want the weather to get warmer or the days to get longer. The warm glow of torch-lights reminds us to have strength on the inside, to keep our minds and bodies calm, and be thankful for another season.

Resources

Coqualeetza Education Training Centre. *Upper Stó:lō Interaction: Teachings from our Elders*. Sardis, BC: Stó:lō Sitel Curriculum Committee, 1983.

Coqualeetza Education Training Centre. *Upper Stó:lō Fraser Valley: Fishing*. Sardis, BC: Stó:lō Sitel Curriculum Committee, 1979.

Coqualeetza Elders Group. "Coqualeetza Cultural Education Centre." Coqualeetza, 10 June 2010, www.coqualeetza.com.

Leon, Ed. *The Story of Chehalis*. Sardis, BC: Stó:lō Sitel Curriculum Committee, 1983.

Stó:lō Library and Archives. "Shxwili-Halxeywa." YouTube, 10 Feb. 2015, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X0GXoSbM34Q&t=3s>

Sisson, William. "Pure Magic." *Anglers Journal - A Fishing Life*, 5 Nov. 2020, <https://www.anglersjournal.com/freshwater/pure-magic-torchlight-fishing>



[Video link to A torch lighting story by Ts'ats'elxwot \(Elizabeth Herrling\)](#)



[Link to Stó:lō language practice](#)