

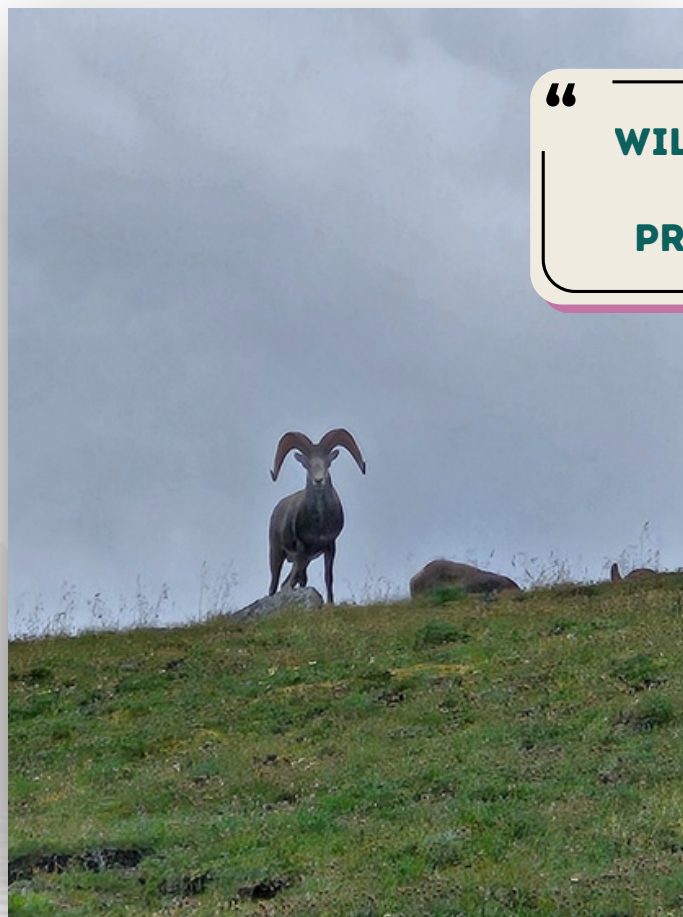


October 2025

BRFN Implementation Agreement Planning Newsletter

Welcome to the 8th edition of the Blueberry River First Nations (BRFN) Implementation Agreement Planning newsletter! Pages **4-5** of this newsletter are a quick refresher about the project, while pages **6-13** provide important project updates since July 2025.

Highlights from the Land through Our Lenses: BRFN Photo Contest!



“
**WILDLIFE HERE
NEEDS
PROTECTION**
”

CONTEST WINNER* #1: BIG HORN SHEEP, BY JACKSON WOLF APSASSIN

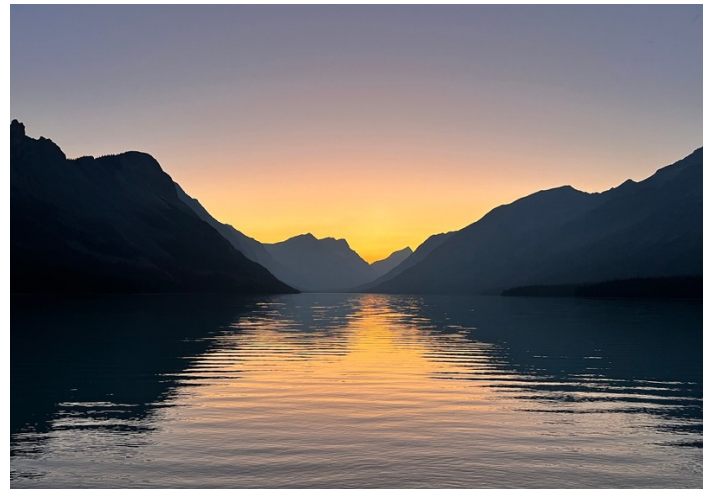
**Note: Contest winners were selected by random draw*

October 2025 | BRFN Implementation Agreement Planning Newsletter

"THIS IS MY WIFE, HANNAH, AT BILLY'S FISHING HOLE. ONCE AGAIN, WE NEED TO PROTECT OUR WATERS SO WE CAN CONTINUE TO FISH THE WATERS AND PROVIDE FOR OUR FAMILY IS THE MOST IMPORTANT TO ME."



CONTEST WINNER #2: BILLY'S FISHING HOLE, BY WYATT APSASSIN



SUBMISSION BY PATRICK CHIPESIA



SUBMISSION BY WYATT APSASSIN



SUBMISSION BY JAMES HAGGARD



SUBMISSION BY PATRICK CHIPESIA

October 2025 | BRFN Implementation Agreement Planning Newsletter

"THE LAND IS NOT TOUCHED HERE AND NICE FOR HUNTING AND NOTHING DONE TO THE LAND SO THE ANIMALS HAVE A SAFE PLACE TO BE."



SUBMISSION BY JAMES HAGGARD



SUBMISSION BY STEPHANIE APSASSIN



SUBMISSION BY PATRICK CHIPESIA



SUBMISSION BY JACKSON WOLF APSASSIN



CONTEST WINNER #3: BY RANDA ADEKAT

Project Background

ABOUT THE IMPLEMENTATION AGREEMENT

In 2023, BC and BRFN co-developed the Implementation Agreement, which sets out how we will work together in a new way to protect the land, manage resources, and protect Treaty rights in Blueberry Territory.

The Implementation Agreement establishes:

- Protection of some areas from oil and gas development and commercial forestry;
- New rules for all natural resource sector activities throughout the Territory with a focus on protection of Treaty Rights;
- Restoration funding for areas identified by BRFN as a priority for restoration; and
- A joint process for BRFN and the Province to co-develop land protection plans across priority watersheds and High Value areas.

This is what we are working on in this project!

WHAT'S THIS WORK ABOUT?

Between July 2024 and December 2025, we are developing **plans for protecting and restoring all High Value areas and priority watersheds (also known as Watershed Management Basins) across our Claim Area.**

This planning follows the guidance set out in the Implementation Agreement with the Province, and will help bring back the values that support our Treaty rights.

WHO IS SUPPORTING THIS WORK?

The BRFN Implementation Agreement Planning is a collective effort led by the **BRFN Lands Department with direction and oversight from Council, and additional guidance and support from the Community Advisory Group.** This group includes representatives from each family, who play a vital role in steering the work and engaging with their family members.

BRFN has also hired Firelight, an Indigenous-owned consulting firm, to support this work. Firelight has been on the ground supporting family group engagement, community open houses, and land-based mapping activities. For more information about who Firelight is, check out our March newsletter, which you can find on the [TRL and IA Planning Project page](#).

October 2025 | BRFN Implementation Agreement Planning Newsletter

HOW WE ARE DOING IT

Our approach to this work involves:



DEVELOPING THE PLANS:

Analyzing values identified by BRFN (e.g., old forests, important spiritual sites, moose habitat) and mapping zones to protect these values.



COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT:

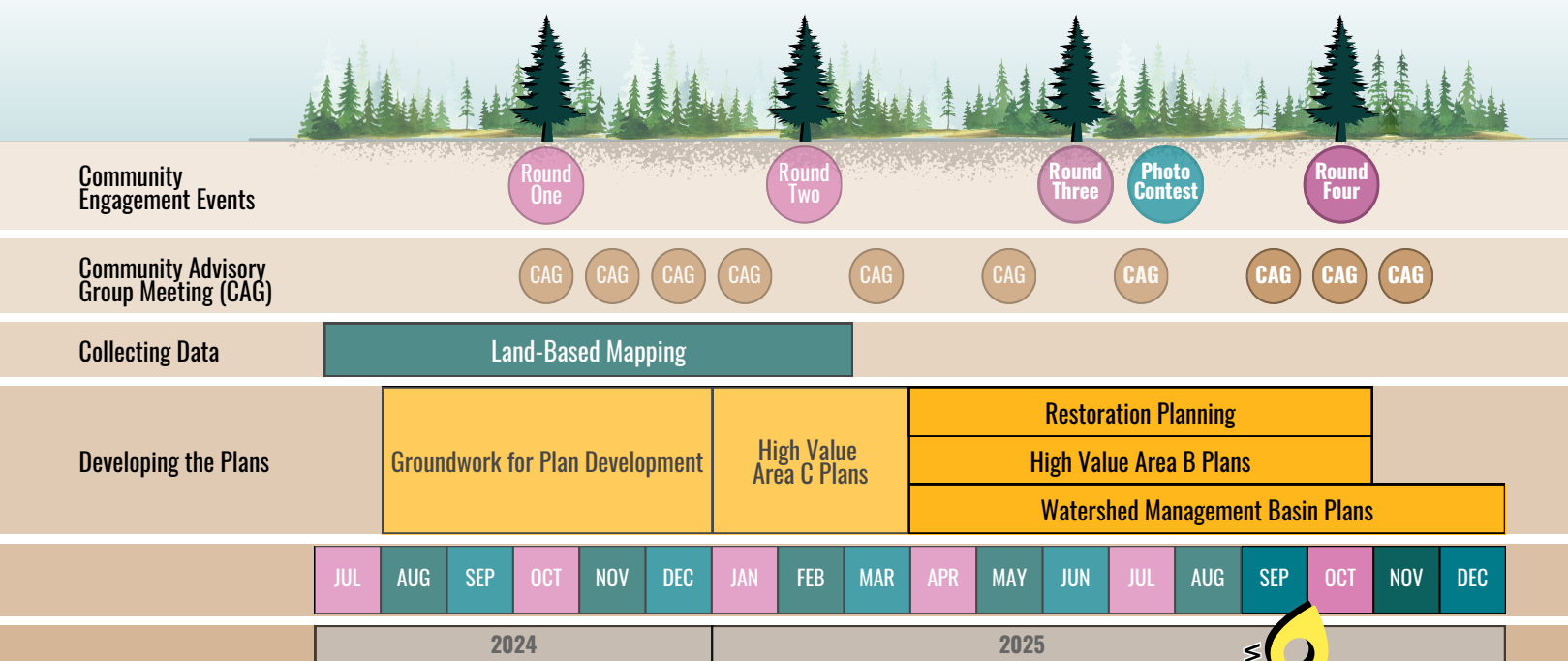
Organizing ways for members to provide input throughout the project, ensuring the plans are driven by BRFN members' knowledge and priorities.



LAND-BASED MAPPING:

Gathering community members on the land to map important features, improve data quality, and keep members connected to this work. This step is complete.

THE PROJECT TIMELINE



Project Update

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT



THE LAND THROUGH OUR LENSES: BRFN PHOTO CONTEST

Community input on places and values that are important for protection has been key throughout this project. As part of community member engagement, a photo contest was organized between July 22 to August 15, 2025. BRFN community members were invited to share photos showcasing areas and values they would like to see protected, including a geotag showing where the photo was taken so the planning team could make sure that area was included for protection (as much as possible).

Each entry was entered into a draw to win exciting prizes, including:

- An iPad
- A hunting pack (including hunting knives, scope, bag, and more!)
- A camping pack (including tent, cooler, and gazebo!)

In total, we received 21 incredible photo submissions, a bunch of which are included throughout this newsletter.

Big thank you to everyone who participated!

Image Source: Patrick Chipesia

CULTURE CAMP

The project team is grateful to have had the opportunity to attend the 2025 BRFN Culture Camp and connect with community members. During Culture Camp, the project team had the privilege of participating in activities, sharing posters and information about the project and the Land through Our Lenses photo contest, speaking with attendees, and conducting four video interviews with members who responded to the statement “In the future I want BRFN lands and waters to be...”

Big thank you to everyone who joined us, and for inviting us to participate in Culture Camp!



“IN THE FUTURE, I WANT BLUEBERRY RIVER FIRST NATIONS LANDS TO BE PROTECTED, THE WATERS PROTECTED, TREES PROTECTED, AND OUR CRITICAL AREAS OF HUNTING TO BE PROTECTED FOR OUR FUTURE GENERATION. ALSO, [I WANT TO] HAVE THE OLDER GENERATION TO TEACH THE YOUNGER GENERATION THE WAY OF THE LAND.”

- ANTHONY POUCECOUPE



“I WOULD LIKE TO SEE THE LAND AND WATER CLEAN AND PROTECTED, ESPECIALLY THE PINK MOUNTAIN. THERE ARE PLANTS UP THERE THAT DON'T GROW ANYWHERE ELSE IN THIS AREA. YOU MIGHT FIND THESE PLANTS IN THE YUKON, BUT THAT'S TOO FAR TO TRAVEL TO GO LOOK FOR THEM. IF THEY DO ANY DEVELOPMENT ON PINK MOUNTAIN, LIKE WIND POWER OR SOMETHING LIKE THAT, IT WILL DESTROY ALL THE PLANTS AND ANIMALS. THEY SAY WIND POWER IS ECO-FRIENDLY, IT MIGHT BE, BUT IT DOES DAMAGE THE LAND AND ANIMALS IN A LOT OF WAYS.”

- STRATEN ADEKAT

Image Source: James Haggard

COMMUNITY ADVISORY GROUP

The Community Advisory Group (CAG) continues to include representatives from each Family Group who have been tasked with:

- Helping organize community engagement;
- Reviewing project information;
- Sharing project updates and communications; and
- Encouraging and coordinating their family members to participate in the project.

The CAG met most recently on July 16, 2025, to hear a report back on what was heard during the June engagement events. Additionally, at this meeting, the CAG provided their input on who to engage regarding woodlots overlapping with protection areas, the Land through Our Lenses: BRFN Photo Contest, and BRFN's 2025 Culture Camp.

Thank you to the CAG for all the work you do!



Image Source: James Haggard



DEVELOPING THE PLANS



As part of protecting parts of Blueberry Territory from further extensive development, plans are being developed to protect priority areas for the practice of Treaty rights. The plans are being developed by analysing values identified by BRFN and identifying zones to protect these values.

OUR VALUES

CONNECTING, PROTECTING, AND RESTORING ECOSYSTEMS



Wildlife corridors



Forests



Water and wetlands



Climate and fire resilient ecosystems

WILDLIFE, HABITAT, AND PLANTS



Wildlife habitat (moose, bear, caribou, and furbearer)



Important plant collection areas



Threatened, endangered, and rare species and ecosystems

CULTURE AND COMMUNITY



Culturally important sites (burial sites, cabins, trails, etc.)



Community well-being (including sustainable economies)



Peaceful enjoyment

HIGH VALUE AREA PLANNING UPDATE

After having completed planning for the two HV1C areas (Grizzly Creek Complex and Upper Halfway, both 60% protected) by the end of March, we have been focusing on planning for the HV1Bs (80% protected). The plans include draft maps showing:

- Protection zones, where key cultural and ecological values are protected from new disturbance; and
- Development zones, where new development will be concentrated.

Key cultural and ecological values for protection have been identified through both community input (e.g., from many years of mapping cultural sites, from community engagement for this work, and through the Land Based Mapping stream) and western science data (e.g., forest age, wetlands). We then relied on community input to identify the most important areas to protect, based on where these different values overlap. We particularly focused on protecting cultural sites, wetlands and water, habitat for animals, and older forest.

Community members reviewed and discussed the first half of the HV1B maps in February 2025, and the second half in June 2025. Input from community members was incorporated into the draft maps.

Industry groups who work within BRFN's Claim Area shared their development plans for the HV1 areas, which was incorporated into planning for the HV1 areas.

REFRESHER: HIGH VALUE AREA PLANNING

High Value areas, also known as Critical Cultural Areas, are locations identified by members (from 2015 onwards) as important for protection. These High Value areas were then included in the Implementation Agreement.

High Value areas (or HV1 areas) receive one of three levels of protection:

- HV1A = 100% protection
- HV1B = 80% protection
- HV1C = 60% protection

The map in Figure 1 provides a snapshot of which areas will receive which level of protection.

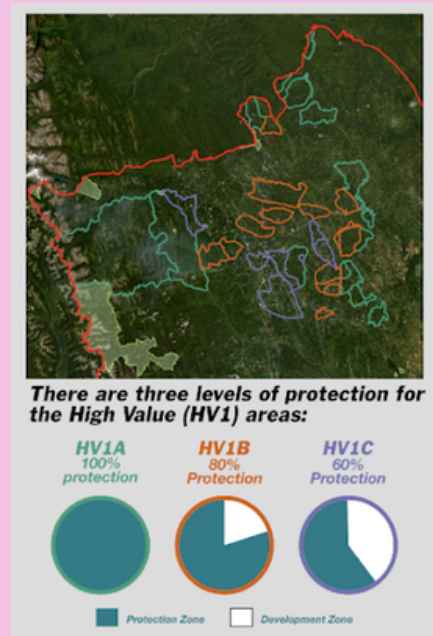


FIGURE 1. HIGH VALUE AREA LEVELS OF PROTECTION



October 2025 | BRFN Implementation Agreement Planning Newsletter

Any areas where industry's development plans overlapped with BRFN cultural and ecological values were flagged. The planning team reviewed these areas of overlap with industry so that impacts could be reduced, keeping in mind one of the project's goals to concentrate future development within areas that have already been disturbed by industry, while prioritizing protection in areas that are the most intact.

As part of this process, the planning team met with key Knowledge Holders from families and traplines whose values would be overlapped by the proposed industry projects to get their input on whether the proposed projects were acceptable or not. This took place between September 8-12, 2025 through a mix of office meetings and on-the-land site visits. Thank you to those who participated in these important conversations!

Additional work is being done to identify restoration priorities within the High Value areas so that important restoration work can continue to happen.

Within protection zones in each of the HV1 areas, oil and gas activity is restricted to the existing footprint. Projects that would require new disturbance in the protection zones (i.e., proposals by industry for oil and gas related projects that are off of the existing footprint) are not allowed, unless they get BRFN Council's consent. Trapline holders will continue to be involved in decisions around any new referrals. Additionally, forestry will only be allowed in woodlots. There will be no more land privatization of provincial Crown forest across the Claim Area without BRFN's consent, including in HV1 areas. Efforts will be made to restore areas that have been impacted by industry.

HOW WERE HIGH VALUE AREAS ORIGINALLY IDENTIFIED?

In 2015, BRFN held community engagement sessions to ask for member input into identifying the most important areas to protect in the territory. At the time, these areas were called "Critical Cultural Areas." Some revisions were made to these areas by BRFN Lands staff in consultation with Elders and knowledge holders. The result of that work is the High Value areas mapped in April 2019, also called the "HV1" areas, that are now part of the Implementation Agreement.

WATERSHED PLANNING UPDATE

Input from community members throughout the project, especially during the June engagement, has been key to identifying values BRFN wants to see protected, (as shared on page 9) and how they should be cared for into the future. This information is guiding the reserve design for the watershed plans, determining which areas will be set aside and protected from certain industrial activities. In the past couple of months, the planning team has been looking at:

- **Current conditions of BRFN values:** Looking into things like “How are moose populations doing across BRFN territory?” “How impacted are our rivers and waterways?”
- **Scenario planning:** Considering “How will these values recover based on the amount of BRFN’s lands that will be protected over the coming decades?”
- **Protecting lands and waters:** Thinking through “How and where can we protect certain areas across the priority watersheds to support the recovery of these values?”

Where and how the protections will apply across the watersheds is still being determined through discussions with BC, with the BRFN planning team advocating for as much protection as possible (based on what we’ve heard from BRFN community members so far). The planning team will be coming to community to share an update on the watershed plans and get feedback from BRFN community members in October, so please stay tuned for more opportunities to have your say!

REFRESHER: WATERSHED PLANNING

While planning for the High Value Areas over the past few months, we’ve continued to think about them within the broader context of the priority watersheds (also called Watershed Management Basins, or WMBs) to make sure that the protection zones are connected across the wider landscape. The priority watersheds include Blueberry River, Upper Beatton River, Middle Beatton River (the part west of the Beatton River), and part of the Lower Sikanni Chief. This will help wildlife move freely and protect important natural areas, like wetlands, that need connected spaces to stay healthy.

WHAT'S NEXT?



Community Engagement:

- Meet with the Community Advisory Group for meeting #8 in October.
- October community engagement: review and seek input on the watershed (Watershed Management Basin) plans – stay tuned for event invites!



High Value Area Planning:

- Address the remaining critical overlaps between the draft protection zones and proposed industry plans.
- Complete draft maps for the remaining HV1Bs to be reviewed by BRFN Council and BC by the end of October.



Watershed Planning:

- Develop draft plans for the priority Watershed Management basins to be shared for review and community input.

WANT TO KNOW MORE?

Members can find information related to this project on the members-only [TRL and IA Planning Project page](#) on BRFN's website. There you can find a list of answers to frequently asked questions, such as: "What does revenue sharing from the IA look like, and how does BRFN benefit?"

Still have questions? Please send them to iacomms@blueberryfn.ca. You can access all previous newsletters and info sheets on the [TRL and IA Planning Project page](#).

Image Source: Patrick Chipesia