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Stephany Cloutre-Groleau is an Indigenous student at British Columbia Institute of Technology (BCIT) and a member of the Algonquin Nation of Ontario. Through BCIT and Clear Seas, she is working on a year-long internship and documentary project called Protecting Giants that combines modern science (such as drone monitoring, vessel tracking, ArcGis mapping, and thermal imaging) and Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK) to help prevent whale strikes along the coast of British Columbia. Using this combination, the project works toward practical ways of reducing vessel strikes while respecting both cultural and ecological values.

Stephany has a lifelong connection to animals and her Indigenous roots, which have taught her to see wildlife not only as species to protect but as relatives with which we share the world. Since she was a child, she wanted to work with whales. Her path first unfolded through wildlife rescue and care, which eventually expanded into falconry and wildlife management. These experiences taught her patience, responsibility, and the importance of respecting the instincts of wild animals. As she learned more about marine conservation, she became aware of the growing problem of whale-vessel strikes. Seeing how many whales were being injured or killed by ships gave her both urgency and direction.



At its heart, Protecting Giants is about connection – between people, whales, and the waters that sustain us all. This project is not only about preventing vessel strikes, but about weaving together knowledge systems, honouring Indigenous stewardship, and reminding us that the ocean is a living relative, not just a resource. Stephany hopes the project inspires others to listen deeply, to learn from both science and traditional teachings, and to act with responsibility toward the ocean.

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