

## Songhees Lands Department and How it Relates to Kwetlal

### Songhees Lands Department

The Songhees Lands Department was created from the ground up by Cheryl Bryce, the present Lands Manager of the Songhees Nation.

The Lands Department currently works under the Indian Act as an R-LAP band. One goal of this department is to work toward self-determination. One area that was delegated to Cheryl by Chief and Council is the Land Code Development Process.

### Implementation of the Land Code To become an Land Code Community:

1. Successful vote by Community on Land Code on the Individual Transfer Agreement.
2. Begin developing laws and policies from the Land Code. Such as, land use, environmental and marital breakdown & divorce.

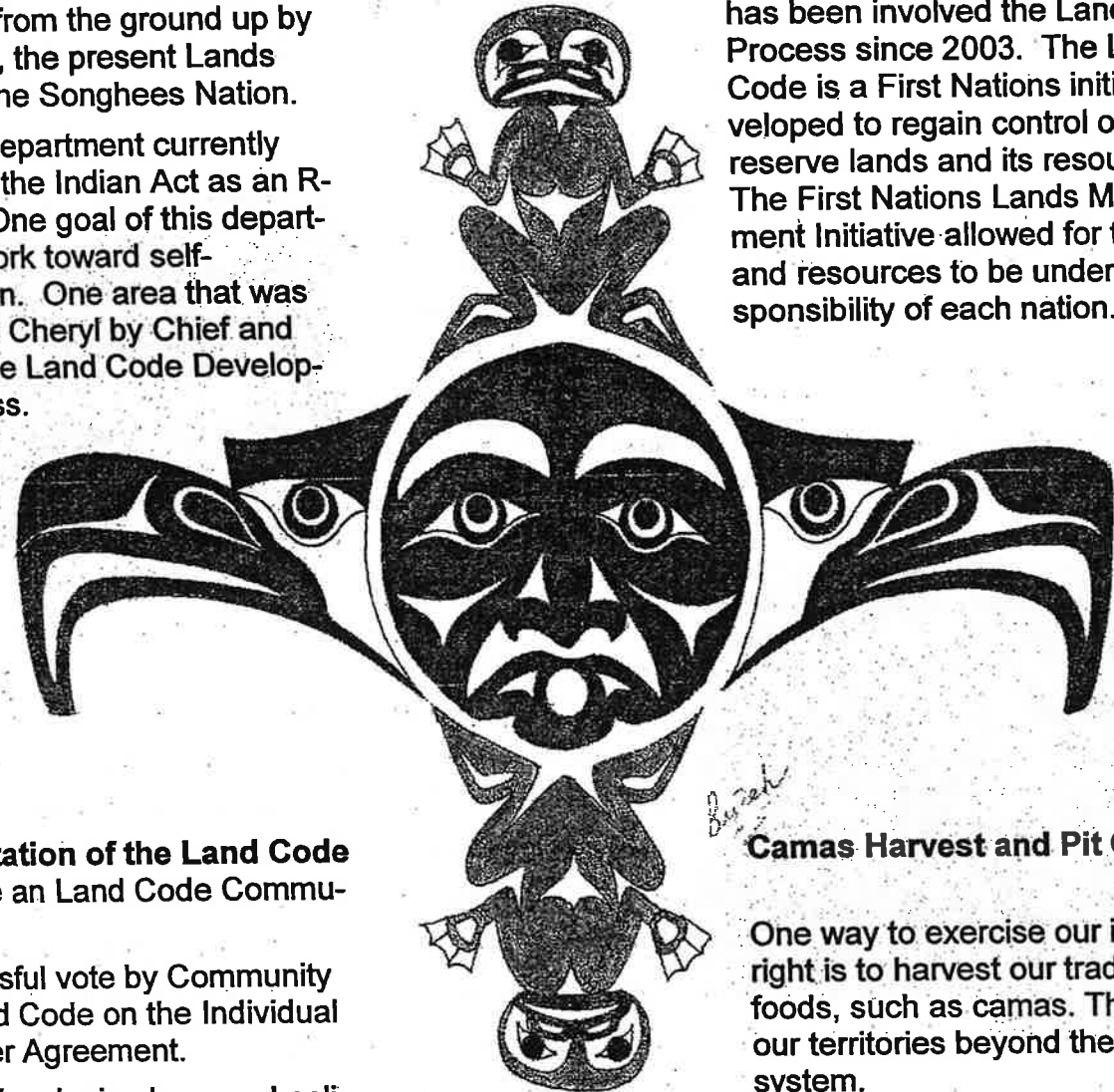
### Land Code Process

The Songhees Lands Department has been involved the Land Code Process since 2003. The Land Code is a First Nations initiative developed to regain control over our reserve lands and its resources. The First Nations Lands Management Initiative allowed for the Land and resources to be under the responsibility of each nation.

### Camas Harvest and Pit Cook

One way to exercise our inherent right is to harvest our traditional foods, such as camas. This includes our territories beyond the reserve system.

In restoring our traditional resources and cultural landscapes we will also restore an important part of our culture the women's and children's roles in our community.



Logo by Butch Dick



## Kwetlal "Camas"

### Camas Harvest and Pit Cook

The Lekwungen (Songhees) people have been involved in camas harvests and pit cooks as far back as our people can remember. Camas, kwetlal, is one of our traditional staples, our main food resource. Camas was an important form of food starch that sustained our people through many generations.

The Lekwungen people's camas bulbs were an important trade item as well. We had two types, the common and great camas. Songhees was known for trading camas and was visited by various nations.

For over six years now, Cheryl Bryce has been involved with harvesting camas and pit cooks. These pictures are from various camas harvests and pit cook on Tichless, "island" (Discovery Island). Lekwungen traditional territories were ample with camas.

Cheryl recalls harvesting some traditional foods with her grandmother as a young child. She took the values from these teachings into harvesting camas. She continues to harvest and pit cook as her ancestors did in the past. There is nothing like opening a pit cook to share a magnificent feast with our family and guests.

Harvesting camas was just one way for our people to sculpture the landscape in our traditional territories. Each family group would have an area of land where they would harvest the camas. Harvesting areas were managed by the women. Often the Lekwungen women would have their children helping in the harvest.

### Lekwungen Summer ~ by Cheryl Bryce

*In waves of purple along the green shore  
I see you standing there, proud and beautiful,  
Tempting the yellow backs with your nesting nectar.*

*To protect your precious fruit, I weave on through  
Praying for your strength and nurturing power.  
I watch you grow and wait to savor your essence.*

*Your sacrifice is not forgotten. I come with gifts of respect.  
My feet drum with the heartbeat of the earth,  
As my hands shake to the rattling repetition of the gestating seeds.  
I watch the future fall before me.*

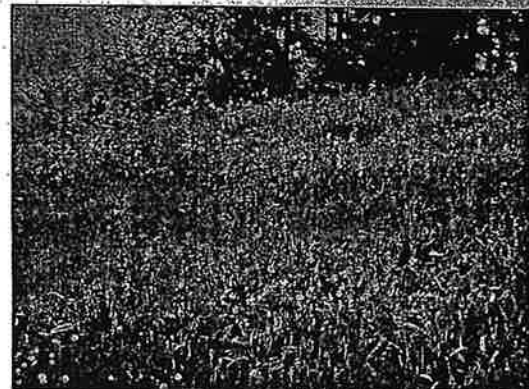
*With the flame of fertility  
I brush your sacred seeds with my ancestors' song.  
In the stamina of my families' dance  
I give you protection through winter's rest.*

*It is a blessing to witness your gifts, & share your offerings.  
In your honor I have brought the power of the sun and return  
your sacredness.*





# Lekwungen People: Camas Harvest and Pit Cooks



Picture taken by Cheryl Bryce on Discover Island

### In the Past

The Lekwungen people have gathered, harvested, and prepared camas for thousands of years. The Lekwungen territory was known for their camas meadows. They were large areas that covered most of what is known today as Victoria. Camas is a versatile plant that can grow in many different terrains. However, the naturally flat landscape in various areas in Lekwungen territory was excellent for harvesting. In the past, the camas meadows were owned by certain families, women. Lekwungen Women sculptured the camas meadow landscape with traditional management. This included weeding, seeding, harvesting and burning.

### At Present

At present, Cheryl has been regenerating traditional harvests and pit cooks with her community for over 5 years. She has been involving the youth in harvesting camas and preparing the traditional pit cooks. Youth from various nations and all ages have shown great interest in camas harvests and pit cooks. The camas meadows can be found in various areas in Victoria. It doesn't compare to historical landscape the Lekwungen managed. Today they are in great decline due to urbanization, pollution and lack of traditional management.



Picture taken at South Wharf, Victoria

### Future

The Lekwungen people will continue to harvest and prepare the camas for many years to come. Its importance is vital to our history, traditions and future roles and responsibilities. There is still so much work that needs to be done with regards to camas and cultural restoration. There is a growing need to have access to traditional food in Lekwungen Territory. Even more so to environmentally safe food to consume. Cultural roles and practices need to be included in the restoration of these ecosystems.



Picture taken by Cheryl Bryce

# Kids and Kwetlal

This page is dedicated to the kids, and kids at heart. Kwetlal is our traditional name for the Camas plant. Kids and youth alike have been involved with harvesting camas and traditional pit cooks too! Various Songhees youth joined the camas harvest and pit cook on Discover Island in the summer of 2001 & 2002. It is hoped they will continue using the knowledge they gained about our ways with future harvests and pit cooks. It is something that needs to be remembered through them and passed onto to their children and grandchildren.

Plant inventory survey, 2005. Baby Joshua pointing to a camas flower at the University of Victoria. It didn't take very long for Joshua to know what to look for in the camas meadows. He quickly learned what to look for and identified the camas flower. Joshua has been backpacked through camas meadows since he was 3 months old by his Auntie.



Taken by Cheryl Bryce at UVic 2005



Taken by Kathy Bryce June 17, 2005 at UVic

University of Victoria June 17, 18, 2005. Camas harvest in over the past 6 years have been enjoyed by many. Kids of various ages have enjoyed weeding, digging and finding the kwetlal along with the women. On June 17, 2005 Cheryl introduced her sister Kathy, nephew Joshua, friends Charlotte and Pam to their first camas harvest that took place at UVic. Joshua laughed with delight at the sight of his auntie and mother digging in the dirt with him. On June 18, 2005 Cheryl did the same with her nephew Shawn and his friend Phoenix.

**Two of our youth, ages 7 and 8. Here are two young people doing their first harvest of camas at the University of Victoria. Shawn is showing Phoenix a camas bulb he has found. Both boys done some weeding and dug for camas bulb. It was a wonderful treat to see these young ones get so excited about the camas and harvesting. Once they were able to identify the camas bulbs, they went straight to work. Shawn has been learning about camas ecosystems on his outdoor experiences with his Auntie.**

**They also were able to take in more the various surroundings, the insects, birds, trees and worms that live in the area.**



Taken by Cheryl Bryce June 18, 2005 at UVic