

# Columbia River Treaty and the Syilx People



Presented to CBRAC

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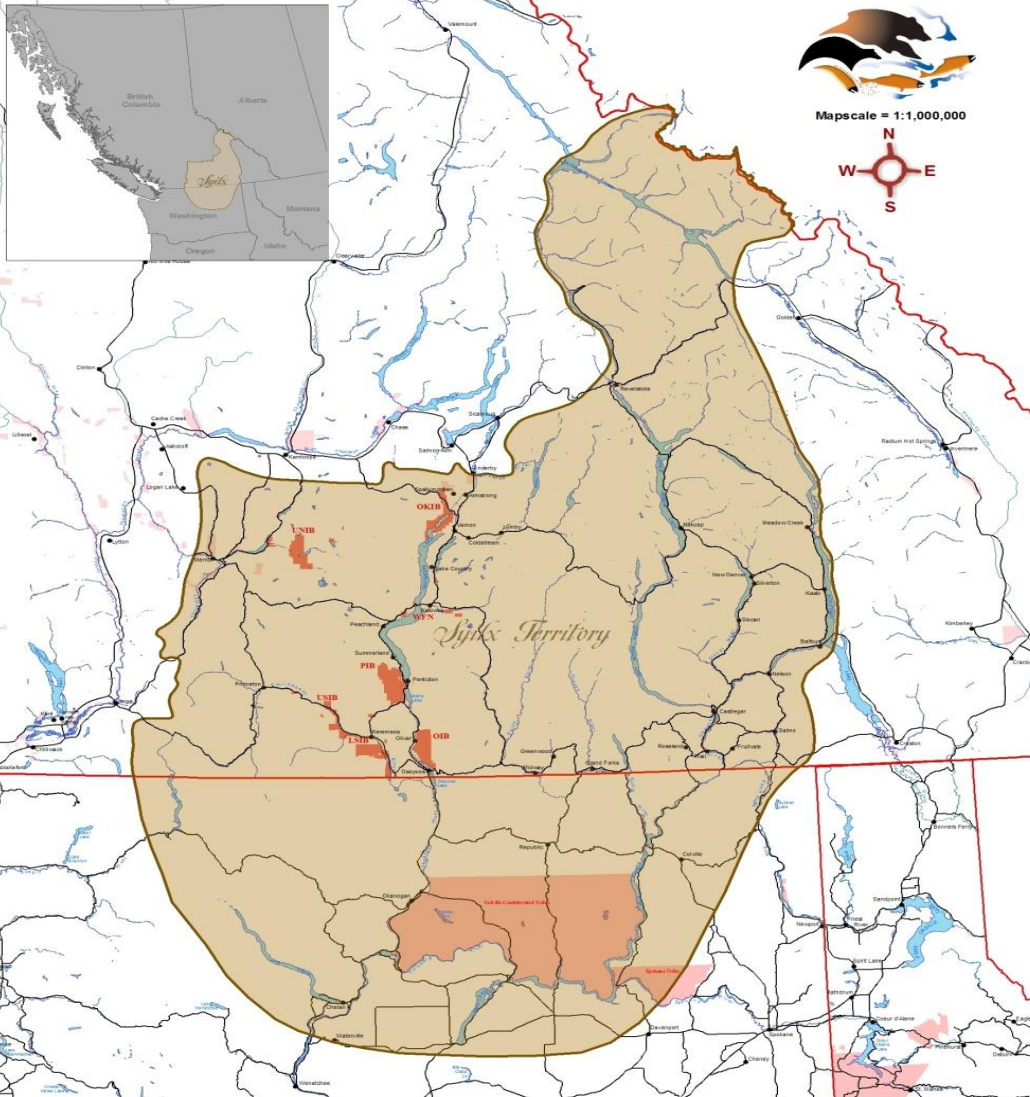
Sr. Policy Advisor

**May 26, 2016**



# Syilx Okanagan Nation Territory

Suknaqinx Senp'í'lx Senx'yá?lpitk S'á'ítik'et Sen'íckstx Senqá'ítik Smelqmix



"Nx'əlx'əltantə" "That which gives us life."

## The Okanagan People Today



## Okanagan (Syilx) Nation Revitalization of an Okanagan Fishery & the *Salmon* People

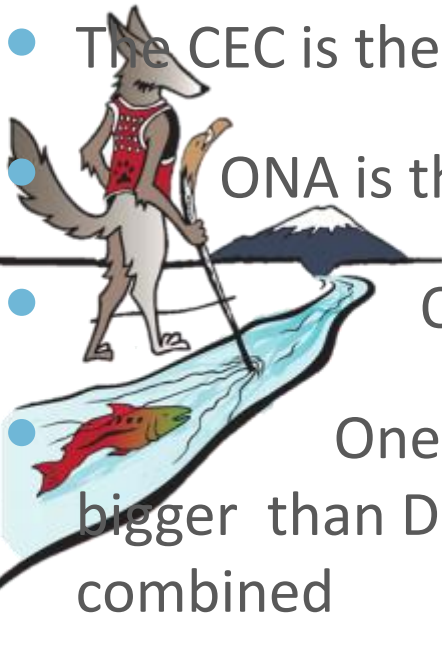
Seven member band communities:

1. Osoyoos Indian Band
2. Penticton Indian Band
3. Westbank First Nation
4. Okanagan Indian Band
5. Upper Nicola Band
6. Lower Similkameen Band
7. Upper Similkameen Band, and
8. Colville Confederated Tribes (USA)



# Okanagan Title and Rights

- Okanagans are a Non-treaty First Nation and as such have not surrendered its Title and Rights interests on its (69,000km<sup>2</sup>) Territory
- The CCT in the US formally re-joined the ONA and the CEC in 2010
- The CEC is the elected political decision making governing body
- ONA is the administrative and technical arm of the Nation
- ONA has five departments and over 100 f/t staff
- One of the largest Fisheries departments in BC -- bigger than DFO-BC Region and the BC FLNRO/MOE fisheries combined



# Okanagans / Sinixts



- Sinixts original inhabitants of the Arrow Lakes
- Okanagans (*Syilx*) and the *Sinixts* - same *Insyilchen speaking peoples*
- 19<sup>th</sup> C. Small pox and miners devastated Sinixts populations
- By 1960s most of *Sinixts* population abandoned last West Kootenay reserves
- Federal Government declared Sinixts Extinct in 1959
- Yet Up to 8,000 Sinixts descendents reside primarily at CCT and the ONA, and in other neighbouring First Nations
- First Nations still use and access region – practice rights regularly

# Columbia River as a Life Force

- Okanagans are a Salmon People
- Columbia River is the main artery of the nation delivering salmon and as historical corridor – Okanagan River is a tributary of the Columbia River
  - Industrialization and CRT devastated region and Salmon
  - First Nations had no involvement in CRT – despite letters
  - Massive impacts from CRT flooded lands/ fisheries and erosion
  - Okanagan System is a tributary



# A WAY OF LIFE



**“The key resource  
for many of the  
Okanagan groups  
was fish, especially  
salmon.”**

*Douglas R. Hudson, “The Okanagan Indians of British Columbia,” in Jean Webber and the En’owkin Centre, eds., Okanagan Sources. Penticton: Theytus Books, 1990, p. 57.*





**“It has been determined that the Syilx consumed four or five times more salmon than other game animals.”**

Marlowe Sam, 2008. Okanagan Water Systems: A Historical Retrospect of Control, Dominance, and Change. Masters Thesis, University of British Columbia Okanagan, p. 23.

# FISHING

“The Indians at Okanagan have a very clever way of catching the salmon.... They make an artificial leap of wicker work right across the river over which the fish jump only to tumble into a basket on the other side.”

*Surveyor Charles Wilson, August 12, 1860 (quoted in Hudson, 1990, p. 59)*





# TIME-HONORED CEREMONY

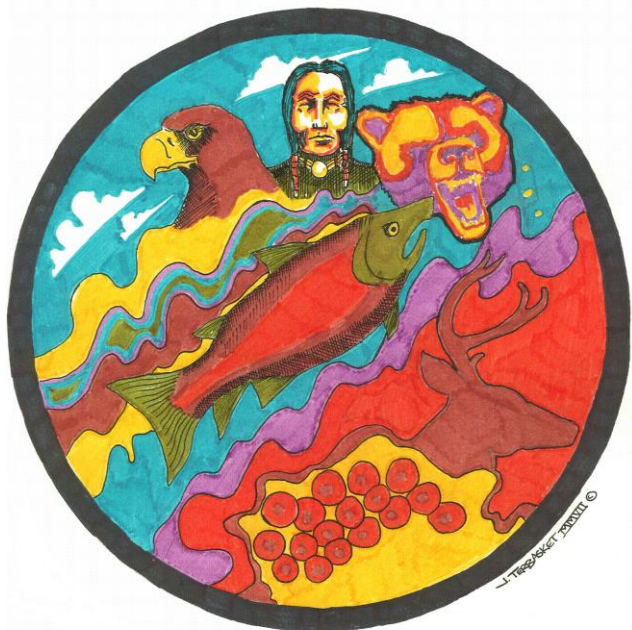
“Salmon fishing was controlled by a Salmon Chief who directed the construction of the traps and weirs and performed a ceremony to mark the capture of the first salmon. ...the First Salmon Ceremony symbolized the dependence on the salmon and the need to maintain a proper relationship with this renewable resource.”

*Douglas R. Hudson, “The Okanagan Indians of British Columbia,” in Jean Webber and the En’owkin Centre, eds., Okanagan Sources. Penticton: Theytus Books, 1990, p. 59.*



# TRADING CENTRE

“The Syilx trading networks reached as far south as the Walula (Snake River confluence), to the Thompson country in the north, to the west the Pacific Coast and extended to the Plains country in the east.”



*Marlowe Sam, 2008. Okanagan Water Systems: A Historical Retrospect of Control, Dominance, and Change. Masters Thesis, University of British Columbia Okanagan, p. 23.*

# IMPACTS



Fishing at Kettle Falls





Grand Coulee Dam under construction

# NO FISH PASSAGE



Grand Coulee Dam



# CEREMONY OF TEARS





## CELILO FALLS



## DALLES DAM



# COLUMBIA RIVER TREATY

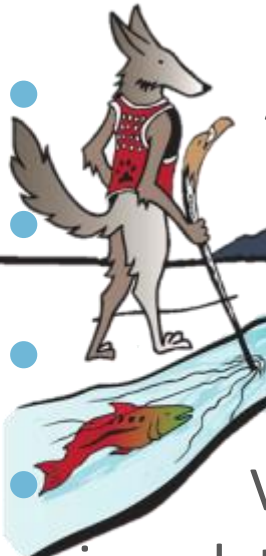
“The Treaty has disrupted  
our way of life in ways that  
very few other things  
have.”

*Grand Chief Stewart Phillip,  
Okanagan Nation Alliance*



# CRT Impacts

- Industrialization of the Columbia culminated with the CRT
- CRT has had massive impact to the Title and Rights interests of the Nation – habitat and 100k + species lost to flooding
- Flooded hundreds of kilometers of land – inundated village and burial sites, fishing and hunting grounds, fertile valleys



- Altered the river system into an industrial reservoir

- Continues to Impact on eco-systems, fish, erosion

- Removed FNs from their responsibilities to the land

- Villages, Ancestral remains, and cultural burial sites inundated – many exposed to erosion/ exposure on new banks



# CRT ONA Review Process

- ONA rejected BC's original consultation process
- Jointly designed new '**CRT Critical Path Process**'
- Insisted Canada Join process – Canada remain as Observers
- Critical Path - Concluded with BC unilaterally releasing its 14 principles
- Deeper fisheries mitigation
- Salmon Passage restore
- Resolution to Industrial reservoir on-going impacts
- Consistent processes from Tsilhqot'in SCC decision
- CRT with meaningful eco-system functions – all species
- Meaningful Economic Benefits



# A DIFFERENT FUTURE AHEAD



# HARD WORK, PARTNERSHIPS & PRAYER





# THE MIRACLE CONTINUES



i?\_siwłkʷ

Excerpt, Olavqan Water Dedication, July 11, 2014

i?\_siwłkʷ sʰxʷłxʷaltət.

WATER IS OUR RELATION.

i?\_ł yʰayʰat stim siwłkʷ i?\_ylmixʷmtət.

WATER BONDS US TO OUR ANCESTRY, OUR DESCENDENTS AND OUR LAND.

kʷu\_ yʰayʰat i?\_kʷu\_sqilxʷ ksepúta?stm áli? ylmixʷmtət i?\_siwłkʷ.

WATER MUST BE TREATED WITH REVERENCE AND RESPECT.

áli? i?\_ńxʷłxʷłtańtət lut kstańmúsmńtm, áli? ksetxístim yʰayʰat i?\_stim.

OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH WATER IS NOT TAKEN LIGHTLY, WE ARE RESPONSIBLE TO ENSURE THAT OUR RELATION CAN CONTINUE TO MAINTAIN THE HEALTH AND RESILIENCY OF OUR LAND AND ANIMALS.

I?\_siwłkʷ ńxʷłxʷłtańs i?\_tnhxʷúla?xʷ ul yʰayʰat i?\_stim

WATER IS THE LIFEBLOOD OF OUR LAND AND OUR ANIMALS AND WE AS SYILX PEOPLE

ksecuxʷstm i?\_siwłkʷ ńa?ńá? knaqs ekʷiskʷsts yʰat a?\_cxʷłxʷalt.

RECOGNIZE WATER AS A SACRED ENTITY AND RELATIVE THAT CONNECTS ALL LIFE.

i?\_siwłkʷ yʰat ta?kin kł\_ksexʷłxʷalts i?\_tnhxʷúla?xʷ ul kł\_tmixʷ.

WATER COMES IN MANY FORMS AND ALL ARE NEEDED FOR THE HEALTH OF LAND AND FOR THE ANIMALS.

mipnúntm i?\_sńa?ńá?s i?\_siwłkʷ kł\_yʰayʰat i?\_stim.

WATER IS OUR MOST SACRED MEDICINE, WATER NOURISHES, REPLENISHES, CLEANSSES AND HEALS.

ła\_cKʷulmstm i?\_siwłkʷ kschá?stim ul ksetxístim.

ANY USE OF WATER SHOULD BE AN ACT OF REVERENCE AND A COMMITMENT TO OUR RESPONSIBILITIES.

yʰayʰat i?\_sxʷłxʷaltət, ʰapná? ul em t\_sphkin, áli? kʷu\_sʰukʷna?qinx.

OF ALL LIFE, NOW AND TO COME, AS SYILX PEOPLE,

i?\_siwłkʷ cxʷuy tł\_tnhxʷúla?xʷ tł wist ul lut ksewsheuts tł\_stim.

WATER COMES FROM THE SKY AND THE HIGHEST PLACE YET IT NEVER WILLFULLY RISES ABOVE ANYTHING.

i?\_taýxʷút mi ctɣap, naẖmł tł\_yʰat tł\_stim, misKʷæKʷáct.

IT WILL ALWAYS TAKE THE LOWEST PATH IN ITS HUMILITY, YET OF ALL THE ELEMENTS, IT IS THE MOST POWERFUL.

kʷu\_scúnma?stm i?\_siwłkʷ kʷu\_kʷæKʷact ul qńqamł.

OUR SACRED WATER TEACHES US THAT WE HAVE GREAT STRENGTH TO TRANSFORM THE HIGHEST MOUNTAIN WHILE BEING GENTLE, SOFT AND FLEXIBLE.

iwá ła\_tqəqip ksksẖnmixa?x ití?. kłʰutxʷ, tqiltkńs, km młxʷuýmł.

WATER WILL ALWAYS FIND A WAY AROUND OBSTRUCTIONS, UNDER, OVER AND THROUGH.

kʷu\_ksecúnma?stm ksecKʷłlnustm xi?młx stim.

IT TEACHES US ANYTHING IS POSSIBLE.

ła\_ctɣap i?\_siwłkʷ lut stim ła\_ctilxʷsts ul kʷu\_ksẖila?x ití?.

WATER MOVEMENTS, PATHWAYS RESILIENCY AND POWER TEACH US WHO WE ARE AND WHO WE CAN BE AS PEOPLE.



*we learn from the past, our Nation moves forward.  
We envision a sustainable territorial land,  
culture and way of life hundreds of years  
from now.*





# *kt cp'alk' stimi*

## **CAUSE TO COME BACK**







**WHEN WE TAKE CARE  
OF THE LAND AND WATER,  
THE LAND AND WATER  
TAKE CARE OF US.**

**THIS IS OUR LAW.**

ONA ANNUAL GENERAL ASSEMBLY, 2013



*sn̓x̌aʔiwłəm* : “Honouring the Sacredness of the River.”

For More Information visit us at  
[www.okanagannation.com](http://www.okanagannation.com)