bridge between nations

A HISTORY OF FIRST NATIONS IN THE FRASER RIVER BASIN

Presented by The Fraser Basin Council

“The important part is sticking together. There are really, really good reasons to do that.”

— THE LATE CHIEF ROY MUSSELL

OUR MESSAGE IS UNDERSTANDING

Welcome. You're reading this booklet to learn about the history and culture of First Nations in the Fraser River Basin, and to better understand the First Nations experience today. As you know, the story of any people is complex. All of the many political, social, legal and economic issues that shape the lives of First Nations are beyond the scope of this booklet. We hope, however, that these pages will be one small step in the journey to communication and respect.

The Fraser Basin Council is committed to increasing awareness and creating partnerships that support sustainability. When it comes to building bridges between nations, all people living in the Fraser River Basin are of equal and great importance. We thank you for joining us on the journey ahead to explore some of the First Nations experience within the boundaries of the Fraser River Basin.

FROM OUR LEADERS TO YOU

The past matters. Nowhere is this truth more evident than in the Fraser River Basin where people of many nationalities, backgrounds, languages and family histories live together.

Many of those who live along the Fraser and its tributaries are relative newcomers to the region. But there are others, the First Nations, who have occupied these lands for thousands upon thousands of years, who have built complex societies founded on distinctive languages and cultures, and who have survived within the forces of nature and the accidents of human history.

The goal of this booklet is to provide a means to enhance the general knowledge of the First Nations peoples of the Fraser River Basin in an effort to engender a better understanding of their history and to foster the respect they so richly deserve.

As Chair of the Fraser Basin Council, I am proud to introduce this booklet, in the expectation that it will assist all of us to better appreciate the human history of the Fraser River Basin and the cultural diversity that makes it one of the most exciting places in the world to live.

It has been my distinct privilege to work with representatives of the First Nations of the region, and through this booklet I look forward to learning more about their past, their cultures, and their many contributions today.

DR. CHARLES JAGO — *Chair, Fraser Basin Council*

As indigenous people, we have traditional instructions handed down to us through generations. We begin each day with prayer, bringing our minds together in thanks for every part of the natural world. It is a special relationship we have with each other. As our roles and responsibilities are fulfilled, we are allowed to live our lives in peace. We are grateful for the natural order.

There is a global calling for Western scientific knowledge to embrace our traditional ecological knowledge and experiences; our world is in jeopardy and we can no longer afford to ignore the consequences. We must learn to work together, and we must strive to understand Mother Earth's natural order.

WE MUST

- Respect traditions and protect Mother Earth.
- Educate others and ourselves on how our tribal communities may be experiencing disproportionate effects, as compared to the general population.
- Exercise our inherent rights, our self-determination, and our government-to-government relationship with British Columbia and Canada.

Our indigenous knowledge teaches us respect for Mother Earth. This knowledge teaches us to be thoughtful about our impact on future generations. We need to make decisions based on concerns for the seven generations to come, and we need to build relationships that allow us to discuss ideas about what is social, what is economic, what is political, and what is spiritual.

GEORGE SADDLEMAN — *Director, Fraser Basin Council*


We Begin

n at the Beginning

Our story begins with a look at some descriptions of First Nations people and the unique qualities that differentiate First Nations groups in the Fraser River Basin. The original people of Canada have an intimate knowledge of the land stemming from a long history and spiritual connection to the natural world. This history and collective wisdom can help lead us towards a more vibrant, sustainable future.

WHAT'S IN A NAME?

There are many Aboriginal people of Canada (First Nations, Inuit, and Métis). The terms "First Nations" and "Inuit" refer to those indigenous people who lived here before Europeans colonized the land. "Métis" is a term sometimes used to describe people of mixed ancestry – descendants of indigenous people and European settlers.

While Aboriginal people live within the borders of Canada, many maintain the existence of their Aboriginal rights and title. Canadians adopted the more respectful "First Nations" in the 1970s to describe the first people, and to replace names like "Indian" or "Native."

THE STATUS QUO

Currently, there are two main categories of legal standing for First Nations in Canada: status Indians and non-status Indians. Status Indians are registered with the federal government and are governed by the Indian Act. Registering can affect a status individual's residence, taxation and education. Non-status Indians are not registered and are not governed by the Indian Act. There are approximately 105,000 status Indians and 75,000 non-status Indians in BC today. Together, they account for approximately 5% of the population of BC.

DID YOU KNOW?

THERE ARE APPROXIMATELY 44,300 SELF-IDENTIFIED MÉTIS PEOPLE LIVING IN BC.


Everything

is Everything

There are many First Nations, and all are unique. Languages, beliefs, and stories of creation are specific to each nation. The weight and meaning of beliefs and stories are passed down through generations. There is, however, one unifying theme that is common throughout all First Nations: everything is one and all is interconnected. Humans, animals, nature, and the spirit world are all tied together in a mystical circle, connecting those who came before, those who live now, and those who shall come in the future.

A NATION OF STORYTELLERS

Stories of creation are kept alive from generation to generation through traditional song, dance, ceremony, storytelling, and art. First Nations stories, or myths, explain the creation of the earth, the birth of the landscape, and the origins of peoples. They also serve to illustrate and instruct on moral and social conventions as well as traditional customs. The importance of these myths to social organization, kinship, status, and art cannot be overstated.

MORE THAN MEETS THE EYE

Popular First Nations myths focus on deceptive, mischievous, and sacred creatures called "transformers." These tricksters, often taking the form of a raven or coyote, can turn themselves and others into objects, animals, or anything else they wish. These transformers are featured in stories about change and the restoration of order.

THE MYTH OF COYOTE

In many First Nations oral traditions, Coyote disrupts order and is a creative force in transforming the world through his instinctive cunning. When he is portrayed in a constant search for food sources, Coyote represents the most basic instincts. In other stories, he is honoured as the father of the people and as an engineer of spirituality in the form of sacred dreams. This trickster is the ultimate survivor as he uses his wits to adapt to the changing times; he is therefore a kind of mythical role model to his people.

FOREVER IS A LONG TIME

FIRST NATIONS TEACH THAT THEIR PEOPLE HAVE OCCUPIED THIS TERRITORY "SINCE TIME IMMEMORIAL," OR FOR A LONGER TIME THAN ANYONE CAN REMEMBER OR TRACE. TO THE FIRST NATIONS PEOPLE, WHOSE CULTURES HAVE TRADITIONALLY RELIED ON MEMORY AND COMMUNICATION TO SURVIVE, THIS MEANS FOREVER.

THERE IS ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVIDENCE TO SUPPORT THAT THE FIRST NATIONS HAVE BEEN IN BC FOR AT LEAST 10,000 YEARS. MANY EXPERTS SUGGEST THAT THESE EARLY PEOPLE FOLLOWED AN INLAND ROUTE VIA AN ICE-FREE CORRIDOR CALLED "BERINGIA," IN WHAT IS NOW CALLED THE BERING STRAIT. THEY MAY HAVE TRAVELLED SOUTH DOWN OUR COAST FROM BERINGIA.

THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVIDENCE IS PARTIALLY DERIVED FROM KEY SITES IN THE FRASER RIVER BASIN. ARCHAEOLOGISTS FOUND A HUMAN SKELETON DATING BACK 8,000 YEARS AT THE GORE CREEK DEPOSIT NEAR KAMLOOPS. ANOTHER SITE SIGNIFICANT FOR ITS SIZE AND THE COMPLEXITY OF ARTIFACTS IS KEATLEY CREEK, NEAR LILLOOET. SOME FIRST NATIONS PEOPLE BELIEVE, HOWEVER, THAT THE CREATOR PLACED THEM HERE FROM THE LAND, WATER, AND SKY.

the land... the people

The Fraser River Basin is a huge area of land, rich in natural resources and home to many people. The natural gifts of the land stem from the abundant Fraser River, a source of life that connected each First Nation in the past and still connects many British Columbians today. Different First Nations cultures add colour to our diverse landscape. Let us journey up from the mouth of the Fraser to briefly meet some of the First Nations people along the way.

COAST SALISH

The Coast Salish people (a non-traditional modern term used to describe a diverse group of people that share a language family) have a special kinship with the land, water, and sky in the area extending from the Strait of Georgia to the southern end of Puget Sound. Coast Salish people in the Fraser River Basin speak Halkomelem (pronounced Halk-o-may-lem), a language that has as many as 17 dialects falling into three major groups: upriver dialects, downriver dialects, and island dialects.

→ DID YOU KNOW? ← The Stó:lô (a Coast Salish people) take their name from the word they give the river, deriving their traditions from it. Stó:lô elders pass down knowledge of the land and resources, teaching that the world was mixed up until the three sons and daughter of Redheaded Woodpecker and Black Bear came into the world to make it right. They travelled through Stó:lô territory transforming people into resources like salmon, sturgeon, beaver, stones, mountains, and trees. Because the resources were once people, they are to be respected. The Stó:lô believe the original person's life force still lives inside each animal and natural feature.

NLAKA'PAMUX

The Nlaka'pamux (pronounced Ng-khla-kap-muhx), sometimes referred to as the Thompson, speak an Interior Salish language. The word Nlaka'pamux means "People of the Canyon," an apt description for the narrow chasms where the Fraser and Thompson Rivers collide. The Nlaka'pamux use clothing, face painting, and jewellery to express the surrounding landscape, their dreams, and their experiences.

→ DID YOU KNOW? ← Nlaka'pamux territory is home to the Stein Valley, an ecologically sensitive area permanently protected from logging in 1995 by the creation of the Stein Valley Nlaka'pamux Heritage Park. The Stein Valley was relatively unknown to the rest of the world until the 1970s, while the Nlaka'pamux have recognized this area as a spiritual place since time immemorial.

TS'ILHQOT'IN

The traditional territory of the Ts'ilhqot'in (pronounced Tsil-ko-teen) people (also called the Chilcotin) is a high plateau stretching 300 kilometres between the Fraser River and Coast Mountains to where the Chilcotin and Chilco Rivers converge. The Ts'ilhqot'in speak an Athapascan language called Tzilkotin. In their language, the name Ts'ilhqot'in refers to the Chilcotin region in which they live.

→ DID YOU KNOW? ← The Tsilhqot'in were known as great hunters and trappers. They used specially trained dogs to hunt bear, beaver, deer, and other animals.

SECWEPEMC

Formerly known as the Shuswap Indians, the Secwepemc (pronounced Se-wep-mx) unites 17 nations along the Fraser, Thompson, and Columbia Rivers. Their language is Secwepemctsin, an Interior Salish language that is divided into western and eastern dialects. Secwepemc is an ancient name that reflects the intimate relationship between the people and the complex waterways. Previously, the Secwepemc Nation regulated use of the land and resources and was a political alliance that protected the territories of the Shuswap. The bands were united by language, culture, and beliefs.

DID YOU KNOW? In 1910, the Secwepemc, along with other interior nations, signed and presented the Sir Wilfrid Laurier Memorial. The Sir Wilfrid Laurier Memorial is an historical document written from the First Nations point of view outlining the Aboriginal lands and rights issues affecting the Secwepemc, Nlaka'pamux, and Okanagan tribes. The Memorial captures the beliefs and principles that guided the struggles of First Nations in 1910. Many of the same issues are still relevant today.

"They told us to have no fear; the Queen's laws would prevail in this country, and everything would be well for the Indians here. They said a very large reservation would be staked off for us (southern interior tribes) and the tribal lands outside of this reservation the government would buy from us for white settlement. They let us think this would be done soon, and meanwhile until this reserve was set apart, and our lands settled for, they assured us we would have perfect freedom of travelling and camping and the same liberties as from time immemorial to hunt, fish, graze, and gather our food supplies where we desired; also that all trails, land, water, timber, etc. would be as free of access to us as formerly."

– Sir Wilfrid Laurier Memorial, 1910.

OKANAGAN

The Okanagan (pronounced O-kan-a-gan) people – who refer to themselves as "Syilx" – have an enduring relationship with the landscape ranging from Mica Creek in the north to Wilbur Washington in the south. Their relationship with the land takes them from Kootenay Lake in the east to the Nicola Valley in the west, covering an area of 69,000 square kilometres. Their collective language is an Interior Salish language referred to as Okanagan; however, the term "Okanagan" is an English version of the word "ukwnaqínx" that designates all of the people living in the Okanagan River watershed.

The Okanagan territory is home to numerous First Nations cliff and cave drawings called pictographs. These drawings of people and animals are evidence that First Nations culture has flourished in the Okanagan Valley for generations.

DID YOU KNOW? The Okanagan people (like many other First Nation people) demonstrate respect by acknowledging the land, the water, and plant life through the use of ceremony. Ceremony plays a key role in Okanagan life. It connects people to their surroundings and to the various stages of life – birth, marriage, and death. Prayer during food-gathering and spiritual training allows them to give thanks or bring attention to concerns.

STL'ATL'IMX

Previously known as Lillooet Indians, the Stl'atl'imx (pronounced Stlat-liemx) Nation brings together communities along the Fraser and Lillooet Rivers. Their traditional territory crosses the high and rugged terrain from Lillooet to Harrison Lake. Their language (S á imcets) is a branch of Interior Salish that is divided into the upper Fraser River dialect and the lower Lillooet River dialect.

Stl'atl'imx life cannot be disconnected from the land. The rivers, mountains, and lakes of their territory provide food, medicine, and spiritual sustenance. Elders pass on the knowledge and lessons of the land to the Stl'atl'imx children as part of their inheritance.

DID YOU KNOW? In 1911, a committee of Stl'atl'imx Chiefs signed a declaration at Spences Bridge asserting sovereignty over Stl'atl'imx lands.

"We claim that we are the rightful owners of our tribal territory, and everything pertaining thereto. We have always lived in our country; at no time have we ever deserted it, or left it to others. We have retained it from the invasion of other tribes at the cost of our blood. Our ancestors were in possession of our country centuries before the whites came."

– Declaration of the Lillooet Tribe, 1911.

WET'SUWET'EN

The Wet'Suwet'en people live on the Bulkley River and around Broman Lake and Francois Lake in northwestern BC. They traditionally speak Witsuwit'en, a dialect of the Babine-Witsuwit'en language. Sometimes the language is referred to as Northern Carrier, or as Western Carrier. These terms are inaccurate desciptions of the language as they incorrectly imply a link to the Dakelh (Carrier) language.

The Wet'Suwet'en have a matrilineal (following the mother's side of the family) house and clan system. As a member of a house and clan, an individual's actions affect the house to which he or she belongs. There are five Wet'Suwet'en clans: Gilseyhu (Big Frog), Laksilyu (Small Frog), Gitdumden (Wolf/Bear), Laksamshu (Fireweed), and Tsayu (Beaver clan).

DID YOU KNOW? The Wet'Suwet'en's oral history, called kungax, recounts that their ancestral village, Dizkle, once stood upstream from the Bulkley Canyon. Although the exact location of the village has not yet been discovered, it is known that it was a cluster of cedar houses lining the river. The village was long ago abandoned after an omen predicted disaster.

SEKANI

The Sekani, or "People of the Rocks," are Athapaskan-speaking neighbours of the Dakelh. The term Sekani is an English version of the terms "tsek'ene" or "t ek'ene," depending on the dialect. Their territory encompasses the lakes and rivers in central and northeastern BC, including Finlay and Parsnip Rivers, McLeod Lake, Carp Lake, and the Williston Reservoir. The Sekani were the first Aboriginal people encountered by Alexander Mackenzie during his travels to the Pacific in 1797.

The Sekani (like many other First Nations people) believe that nothing should go to waste and that everything has a purpose. They take pride in their ability to use every part of nature, piecing groundhog skins together to make blankets. Today the Sekani continue to collect traditional medicinal herbs. Community elders pass on the knowledge of traditional use to the younger generations.

DID YOU KNOW? In 1979, Sekani and Carrier (Dakelh) peoples forged a political alliance through the Carrier-Sekani Tribal Council.

DAKELH

Often referred to as Carrier Indians, the Dakelh (pronounced Da-kelh) are divided into Southern and Central Dakelh. Their traditional territories encompass a vast network of lakes and rivers from the Coast Mountains to the Rockies. Dakelh is a Northern Athapaskan language that means "People Who Travel by Water." The Carrier name is based on a translation of a term (Aghele) that the Sekani people used to describe them. Europeans learned this name first because they entered into the Sekani territory before entering Dakelh territory. The term Aghele is based on the fact that when a Dakelh man died and was cremated, his widow would carry his bones and ashes during the period of mourning.

DID YOU KNOW? The Grease Trail (named after the eulachon fish oil collected on the trail) runs from Southern Dakelh territory to the Coast nations of Bella Coola, and was an important trade route in the exchange of interior goods (obsidian, furs, and caribou meat) and coastal goods (shells, salmon, and eulachon grease).

traditional territories,
LANGUAGE GROUPS


SEKANI
Territory Extends
Outside Of Marked Area
Fort St. James
Burns Lake
Fraser Lake
Vanderhoof
Prince George
WET'SUWET'EN
DAKELH
Mcbride
Quesnel
Valemount
Williams Lake
TS'ILHQOT'IN
100 Mile House
SECWEPEMC
Clinton
Cache Creek
Chase
Salmon Arm
Lillooet
Ashcroft
Kamloops
STL'ALT'IMX
Logan Lake
Lytton
Merritt
OKANAGAN
NLAKA'PAMUX
Hope
COAST SALISH
Vancouver
Abbotsford
Canada
U.S.A.

communication builds community

Through shared understanding, intimacy, and reinforcement of values and social mores, communication is the tool by which First Nations structure their community. Nations are held together by language. It is an important symbol of identity and a vital link to the social, cultural, and spiritual past. In the Fraser River Basin, First Nations languages express beliefs about land, the river, and resources. Their languages communicate a message about sustainability – maintaining balance and interconnectedness with the natural world.




KEEPING LANGUAGE ALIVE

As the transmission of tradition and identity from generation to generation is so important to keeping First Nations culture alive, language loss is a devastating problem. Many First Nations languages in the Fraser River Basin and across Canada have been all but destroyed by the history of colonization and cultural assimilation in Canada.

First Nations, federal, and provincial governments have made a concerted effort over the past 30 years to revive First Nations languages. Together they have launched awareness campaigns, school programs, cultural camps, an oral history collection, and provincial and national programs.

In order to maintain and cultivate effective and meaningful communication with First Nations communities, the revitalization of First Nations language must be given high priority.

LANGUAGES OF THE FRASER BASIN

First Nations languages were not traditionally written or recorded in any permanent way, so the exact number of historical First Nations languages in BC is unknown, although linguists estimate there were at least 30 in use. There are eight language families in BC: Algonquian, Athapaskan, Haida, Ktunaxa, Salishan, Tlingit, Tsimshian, and Wakashan. Each of these families has one or more member languages and distinct dialects. Athapaskan and Salishan language families are represented in the Fraser River Basin.

CULTURE AREAS

There are three major First Nations culture areas within BC. “Culture areas” are defined as geographic regions in which different groups share similar cultures. All three culture areas found in BC are represented in the Fraser River Basin.

a way of life

Culture, family, food: all of these things add up to a sense of home and contribute to the structure of First Nations life. While there are differences between First Nation cultures and practices, all Nations have a strong sense of family, which helps to preserve their complex societies.

The Coast Salish people represent one of the culture areas within the Fraser River Basin, commonly referred to as the Northwest Coast (in terms of its relationship to North America as a whole) by ethnographers. In this culture area, a hereditary chief leads the community in a matrilineal social structure – based on kinship with mothers. People are organized into houses comprised of groups of related extended families. Clans are made up of groups of related houses from different villages in a particular territory. This culture area has the mildest climate and greatest number of food sources, so it has the largest population of First Nations, along with the greatest variety of languages and customs.

The Nlaka'pamux, Okanagan, Secwepemc, Stl'atl'imx and Tsilhqot'in are representative of a second culture area referred to as the Plateau. The Plateau culture area is characterized by forests and dry grasslands drained by the Fraser River. This culture area was not as densely populated as the Pacific coastal areas to the west. Villages, usually located along riverbanks, became the main political units. The villages were comprised of family-based structures led by an elected or hereditary leader.

The Dakelh, Sekani and Wet'Suwet'en are considered part of the third culture area called Subarctic. The Subarctic area is a region of pine and spruce forests with a colder, harsher climate. Because food was not always sufficient to allow large local populations to develop, people generally lived in smaller nomadic bands. Descent was matrilineal in almost all the societies of the western portion of the Subarctic culture area. The basic social and economic production unit was the married couple. Social organization above the family level was highly flexible and was often based on the tasks required to form cooperative working groups.

Not all of the First Nations fit nicely into these culture areas. These are simply general guidelines to help understand some of the First Nations cultural similarities.

SETTLEMENT

The types of homes First Nations traditionally lived in, as well as how long they settled in a particular place, depended largely on the natural environment. People living in the Northwest Coast culture area generally lived in dwellings called Big Houses, grouped into towns marked by totem poles. The rich resources of the sea, rivers, and forest supported permanent settlement of the area. In contrast, the people living in the Plateau and Subarctic culture areas settled into temporary villages of pit houses during the cold winter months and traveled to collect food and resources during the warmer summer months.

SUBSISTENCE

First Nations in the Fraser River Basin made their living through seasonal hunting and gathering practices. They ate mammals such as deer, moose, mountain goat, marmot, black bear, and beaver. They also hunted ducks and grouse and gathered berries, root vegetables, and mushrooms. Bark and long roots provided medicinal benefits.

The First Nations used many unique fishing tools like weirs, basket traps, dip nets, gill nets, and spears to catch sturgeon, cod, trout, eulachon, and salmon. Salmon was prized above all other fish as it was the economic, cultural, and spiritual heart of First Nations in the Fraser River Basin. In some First Nations communities when the first salmon of the season was caught, the people would place it on a bed of boughs to introduce it to the elders in a ceremony using intricately decorated wooden rods.

The importance of subsistence hunting and gathering traditions to the First Nations has not diminished over time; they continue to hunt and gather in the Fraser River Basin today. Historical pressures such as the onset of the fur trade, non-native settlement, and modest reserve lands have forced the First Nations to compete for food with European settlers and in some cases even other groups of First Nations in the past. Today, they must also contend with habitat and species loss as well as hunting and fishing regulations that have impacted their ability to subsist on the land and water.

respect for land

Land provides and sustains life. Respect for land and for all forms of life is central in all First Nations social customs, values, spiritual beliefs, and subsistence practices, regardless of ethnic or linguistic differences. This is a lesson that can be incorporated into all cultures in order to preserve our valleys, mountains, sky, rivers, and oceans for future generations.

ACTION AND REACTION

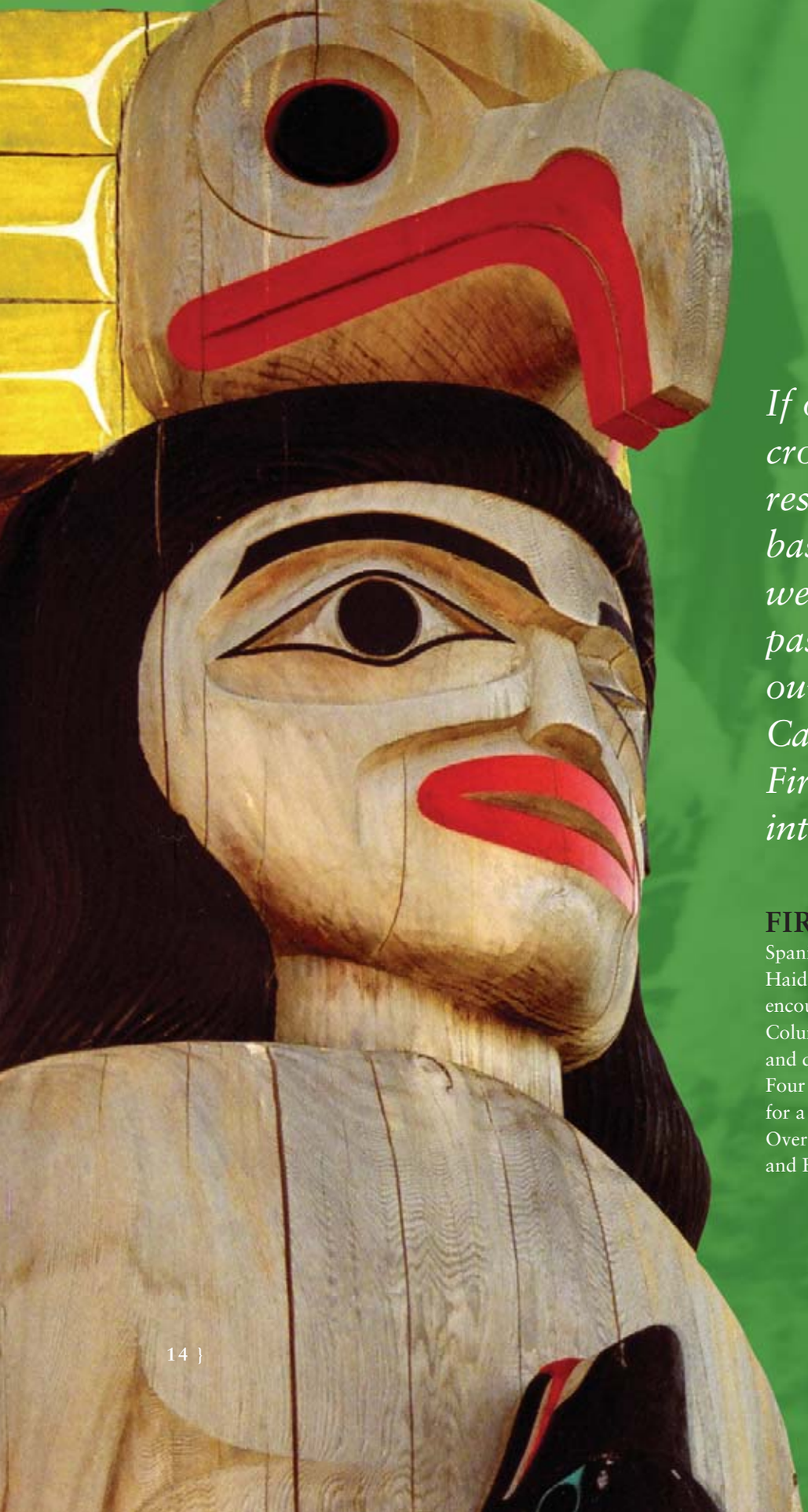
It is a basic law of the physical universe that every action has an equal and opposite reaction. In nature, nothing exists in isolation, and everything is interconnected. One way to understand and to respect the land is to learn about each part and to understand how each part relates to the larger whole. First Nations pass this traditional ecological knowledge down through language and action. This traditional ecological knowledge can help everyone understand the larger world and where human beings fit within it.

Ruby Dunstan, a Nlaka'pamux Elder, speaks to this philosophy:

> "IN OUR LANGUAGE THERE ARE NO WORDS FOR 'ENVIRONMENT' BECAUSE WE HAVE ALWAYS BEEN TAUGHT THAT THIS IS PART OF OUR EVERYDAY LIVING. OUR EVERYDAY TEACHINGS FROM OUR PARENTS, GRANDPARENTS, AND GREAT-GRANDPARENTS SHOW US HOW TO LOOK AFTER THE FOODS THAT WE DEPEND ON AND THAT ARE PART OF THE ENVIRONMENT, AND THAT'S ALSO PART OF SPIRITUALITY."

COME TOGETHER

First Nations have their own intimate understanding of this land and its resources. Their transmission of traditional ecological knowledge is as important for First Nations as it is for all residents of the Fraser River Basin. By recognizing the inherent value of traditional knowledge and working to integrate it with the non-aboriginal perspectives of land and water stewardship, First Nations can then be involved as equal partners. It will be an adventure, but all can work together towards a sustainable future.



A History

If our goal is to understand current cross-cultural conflicts, provide resolution, and build relationships based on respect between peoples, we must understand our collective past. Over the last few decades, our knowledge of First Nations in Canadian history has grown. The First Nations are a prominent and integral part of Canadian history.

FIRST CONTACT

Spanish navigator Juan Perez landed on Langara Island in the Haida territory in July 1774. This is the first-ever recorded encounter between Europeans and First Nations in what is British Columbia today. Two Franciscan friars had also taken the voyage and described the meeting as "tentative, curious, and peaceful." Four years later, James Cook visited Nootka Sound. Cook stayed for a month to refit his ships and trade with the Nuuchahnulth. Over the next 25 years, explorers from England, Spain, Russia, and France visited BC.

# of Nations

THE FUR TRADE

There are two periods of the fur trade: the maritime trade that began after first contact in 1774, and the land-based fur trade that began after 1793. This later trade started when traders for the North West Company pushed beyond the Coast Mountains into BC's north, south, and central interior regions.

The fur trade often conjures images of white European adventurers exploiting innocent Indians with unfair trades of useless shiny objects for valuable furs. Certainly there were dishonest dealings, but the First Nations did have a large amount of control over these trading relationships. Historian Wilson Duff argued that First Nations were not merely "passive recipients of whatever trinkets the traders chose to offer; they held out for goods that they wanted and drove hard bargains." These goods included iron, copper, chisels, knives, pots, muskets, and ammunition.

The fur trade greatly impacted First Nations people. The high demand for furs spurred some First Nations people to increase trapping and hunting. Some became increasingly dependent on metal goods and wool blankets and less dependent on gathering and traditional food preparation. Wealth and power struggles among First Nations erupted where inequities occurred due to profit gained by proximity or influence with traders. Some First Nations also began to settle near trading posts, taking advantage of the new economic practices of the fur trade.

A severe and devastating impact of the fur trade on First Nations was the spread of European diseases such as measles, influenza, scarlet fever, and smallpox. First Nations populations had little immunity to these new pathogens, and the epidemics killed much of BC's First Nations population. Population estimates suggest that First Nations people dwindled from around 250,000 people to roughly 28,000 by 1885.

THE CHILCOTIN WAR

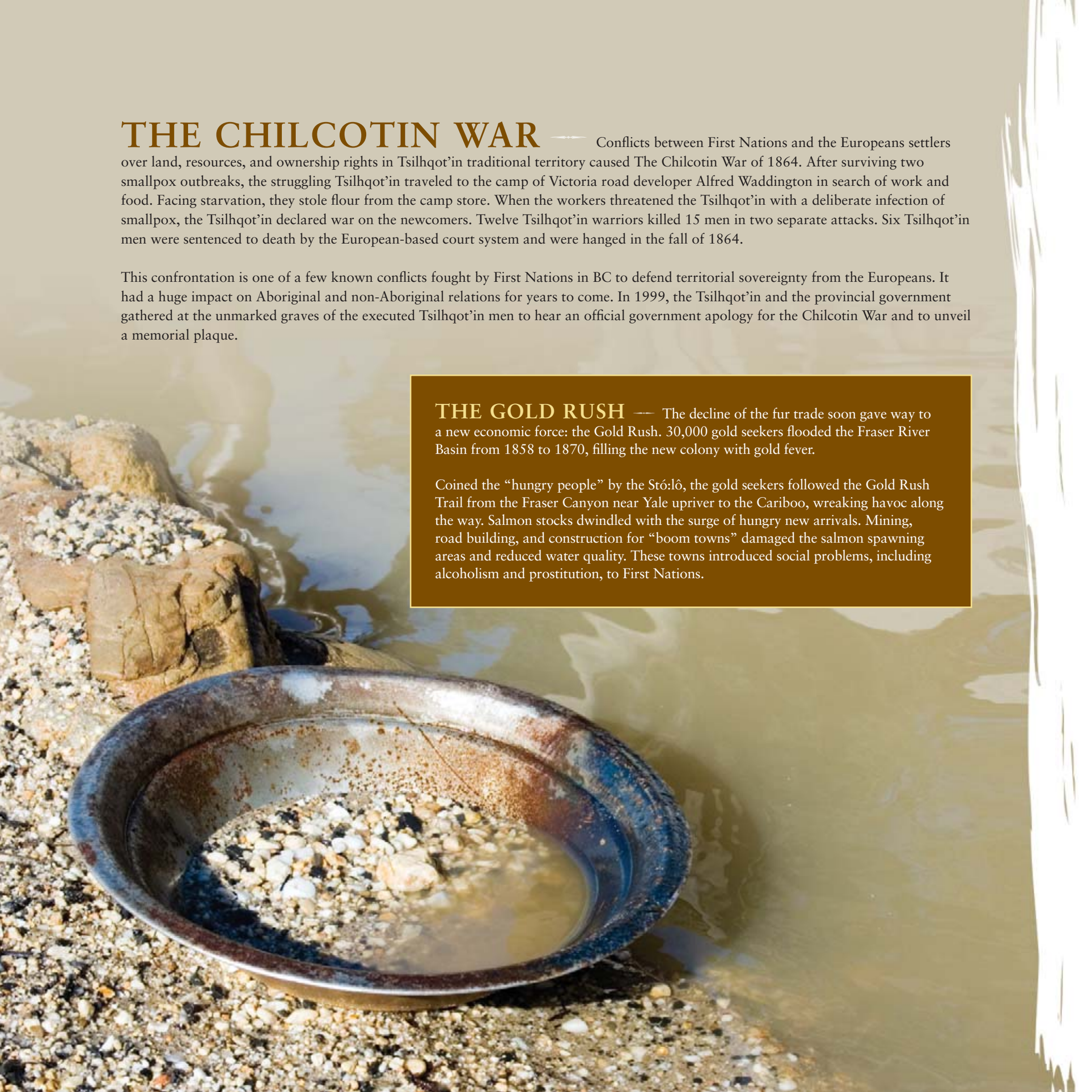
Conflicts between First Nations and the Europeans settlers over land, resources, and ownership rights in Tsilhqot'in traditional territory caused The Chilcotin War of 1864. After surviving two smallpox outbreaks, the struggling Tsilhqot'in traveled to the camp of Victoria road developer Alfred Waddington in search of work and food. Facing starvation, they stole flour from the camp store. When the workers threatened the Tsilhqot'in with a deliberate infection of smallpox, the Tsilhqot'in declared war on the newcomers. Twelve Tsilhqot'in warriors killed 15 men in two separate attacks. Six Tsilhqot'in men were sentenced to death by the European-based court system and were hanged in the fall of 1864.

This confrontation is one of a few known conflicts fought by First Nations in BC to defend territorial sovereignty from the Europeans. It had a huge impact on Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal relations for years to come. In 1999, the Tsilhqot'in and the provincial government gathered at the unmarked graves of the executed Tsilhqot'in men to hear an official government apology for the Chilcotin War and to unveil a memorial plaque.

THE GOLD RUSH

The decline of the fur trade soon gave way to a new economic force: the Gold Rush. 30,000 gold seekers flooded the Fraser River Basin from 1858 to 1870, filling the new colony with gold fever.

Coined the "hungry people" by the Stó:lô, the gold seekers followed the Gold Rush Trail from the Fraser Canyon near Yale upriver to the Cariboo, wreaking havoc along the way. Salmon stocks dwindled with the surge of hungry new arrivals. Mining, road building, and construction for "boom towns" damaged the salmon spawning areas and reduced water quality. These towns introduced social problems, including alcoholism and prostitution, to First Nations.



a legacy of misunderstanding

Like the fur traders and gold seekers who came before them, missionaries and residential schools had an enormous impact on First Nations. We often hear in the news of the negative and destructive influence of the residential schools in particular. Although some of this history is negative, understanding of these influences can provide insight into future, more positive directions.

TREATIES

In the 1850s, Governor James Douglas (Colony of BC) sought to settle First Nations land rights. The Royal Proclamation of 1763 recognized Aboriginal title and established a system to address those rights through treaties. The Royal Proclamation was designed to tackle one of the biggest problems facing the British Empire – maintaining peace with the First Nations who had negotiated land allotments and had long and close relationships with France. Based on this, Douglas negotiated 14 treaties with First Nations on Vancouver Island. Aside from the Douglas Treaties and those settled under Treaty 8 (a treaty settlement negotiated between the government of Canada and First Nations in northern Alberta, northwest Saskatchewan and the southern Northwest Territories which was extended across the prairies and into northeastern BC in 1899), the BC government did not participate in any further negotiations until the early 1990s when the BC Treaty Commission was established. In 1996, the Nisga'a Tribal Council and the federal and provincial governments signed an agreement in principle as a foundation for negotiating BC's first modern treaty (these negotiations were not part of the BC treaty process).

DID YOU KNOW? THE BC TREATY COMMISSION IS AN INDEPENDENT, IMPARTIAL BODY RESPONSIBLE FOR FACILITATING TREATY NEGOTIATIONS AMONG THE GOVERNMENTS OF CANADA, BC AND FIRST NATIONS IN BC. THE BC TREATY COMMISSION IS NOT A NEGOTIATOR OF TREATIES – ITS PRIMARY RESPONSIBILITY IS TO MAKE SURE THAT THE PARTIES INVOLVED ARE BEING EFFECTIVE AND MAKING PROGRESS IN NEGOTIATIONS. 44 OF THE 98 FIRST NATION BANDS IN THE FRASER RIVER BASIN ARE INVOLVED IN THE BC TREATY COMMISSION PROCESS AND ARE PARTICIPATING AT 17 TREATY TABLES TODAY.

MISSIONARIES

Many First Nations communities in BC lost part of their connection to their traditional culture and practices when they converted to missionary philosophy. Missionaries promoted agrarian lifestyles; this was in opposition of many First Nations traditional practices. In some cases, First Nations were even forced to convert in order to access vaccines against small-pox and other diseases. Decades of disease, depopulation, and alienation of traditional lifestyles accelerated the objective of conversion in many areas. In spite of the less than positive beginnings of Christianity for some First Nations people, many work to integrate their traditional teachings with the philosophies of Christianity that will carry on to future generations.

RESIDENTIAL SCHOOLS

The introduction of residential schools operated by Roman Catholic, Anglican, Methodist, Baptist, Presbyterian, and United Churches in the 1880s affected many of the traditions of First Nations. The schools attempted to "re-educate" First Nations children in order to assimilate them into a Eurocentric notion of society. The children were isolated from their families, cultures, and languages. In place of their culture, they were taught European versions of basic academic subjects, along with farming and cleaning practices. Residential schools broke apart many families, destroyed many languages, and alienated many people from their heritage. Recently, the Canadian government provided a nationwide compensation package for residential school survivors who suffered serious physical, sexual, and mental abuse.

aboriginal–state relations

When Canada was formed in 1867, "Indians and lands reserved for the Indians" became a federal government responsibility. Thus, when BC joined Canada in 1871, relations between First Nations and the state fell under federal jurisdiction. The federal government, in an attempt to administer relations, created the Department of Indian Affairs (now called Indian and Northern Affairs Canada) and the Indian Act of 1876.

THE INDIAN ACT

The Indian Act (originally enacted in 1876) sought to regulate First Nations status, reserve lands, education, local government, taxation, and cultural, political, and socio-economic activities. The Indian Act was revised in 1951 and then amended in 1985 to address clauses banning potlatches, the pursuit of land claims, and the nullification of status for First Nations women who married non-Indians. The Indian Act provides First Nations with legal protection of status, medical care, and education.

NEW RELATIONSHIP TRUST FUND

In March 2006, the BC government enacted the New Relationship Trust Act as part of an overall initiative to start a new relationship between government and First Nations. The Trust holds a fund that is designed to provide First Nations with tools, training, and skills so they can participate in land and resource management as well as land use planning processes, and also to develop social, economic and cultural programs for their communities. The independent Board of Directors is appointed by the First Nations Summit, Union of BC Indian Chiefs, the BC Assembly of First Nations, the First Nations Leadership Council and the BC Government.

THE KELOWNA ACCORD

In November 2005, the First Ministers Meeting on Aboriginal issues in Kelowna reached a groundbreaking new agreement. The Kelowna Accord established a framework for workings among First Nations, federal and provincial governments. The underlying premise of the Kelowna Accord is that "All people will benefit from a richer understanding of First Nations culture and from economic, political, and cultural partnerships with First Nations."

The initiatives proposed in the Kelowna Accord have yet to be put into effect due to funding issues.

1763 The Royal Proclamation of 1763. Declared by King George III, to maintain peace and provide order decrees that Indian peoples should not be disturbed in their use and enjoyment of the land.

1774 First recorded West Coast encounter between aboriginals and non-aboriginals. Juan Perez lands in Haida territory.

1793 Fur Trade begins.

1858 Colony of British Columbia created. Treaty and reserve establishment takes root.

1864 Chilcotin War. 15 non-aboriginal men killed and 6 Tsilhqot'in men hanged.

1867 Confederation of Canada

1871 The Colony of British Columbia joins Canada.

1876 Indian Act passed by Canada's Parliament. Act regulates most aspects of native life.

1880 Residential Schools attempt conversion of First Nations people.

1884 Parliament outlaws the potlatch, the primary social, economic and political expression of some aboriginal cultures.

1910 Laurier Memorial. Secwepemc, Nlaka'pamux, and Okanagan Chiefs outline the history of relations with newcomers and put forth requests for Aboriginal Rights.

1912 The Royal Commission on Aboriginal Affairs (also known as the McKenna-McBride Commission). The commission was completed in 1916.

1914 World War I. First Nations across Canada participate.

1927 Parliament amends Indian Act to prevent land claims from going to court

1939 World War II. First Nations across Canada are actively engaged.

1949 First Nations men are allowed to vote in BC provincial elections.

FIRST NATIONS LEGAL RIGHTS

First Nations rights have been studied and challenged during the last 100 years in reports such as the 1916 Report on the Royal Commission on Indian Affairs (known as the McKenna-McBride Commission), the 1963 Survey of the Contemporary Indians of Canada (also known as the Hawthorn Report), the 1969 White Paper, and the 1996 Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples.

In 1982, Aboriginal rights became entrenched in the Canadian Constitution. Since then, they are gaining legitimacy as Aboriginal people continue to seek recognition of their rights. The courts have recognized Aboriginal rights in a number of landmark judgments:

- 1973. Calder case - Supreme Court of Canada holds that aboriginal title did exist but is split on whether it continues to exist.
- 1984. Guerin case - Supreme Court of Canada holds that the federal government has a responsibility to protect Aboriginal land rights on reserves.
- 1990. Sparrow case - Supreme Court of Canada holds that Aboriginal rights that were in existence as of 1982, such as fishing, are protected under the Constitution and cannot be infringed upon without justification.
- 1997. Delgamuukw case - Supreme Court of Canada confirms that Aboriginal title in Gitxsan and Wet'suwet'en territories had not been extinguished. The Delgamuukw case also recognized the inclusion of oral history as evidence.
- 1999. Marshall case - Supreme Court of Canada indicates that treaties signed in 1760 and 1761 by Mi'kmaq and Maliseet communities include a communal right to hunt, fish and gather in pursuit of a 'moderate livelihood'.
- 2000. Nisga'a treaty becomes law - BC Supreme Court rules that the Nisga'a treaty and enacting legislation are constitutionally valid and that self government is a constitutionally-protected aboriginal right
- 2004. Haida and Taku River cases - BC Court of Appeal confirms that the provincial government must properly consult with and accommodate the interests of First Nations, pre-treaty, before proceeding with development on their traditional territory.
- 2005. Bernard and Marshall cases - Supreme Court of Canada rejects the Mi'kmaq claimed treaty right to harvest trees. First Nations groups suggest that the Court merely rejected the logging rights based on Aboriginal title because the evidence in these cases did not meet the legal standard set in earlier cases.

Today, First Nations rights and relations in BC and Canada are complex, dynamic, and ever-evolving.

1960 First Nations are allowed to vote in Canadian federal elections.

1969 Indian Affairs Minister, Jean Chrétien, introduces the White Paper designed to abolish the Indian Act in Canada and recognize First Nations as the same as other minorities in Canada, rather than a distinct group.

1973 Calder case. Nisga'a leader and activist, Frank Calder, argues Aboriginal title to Nisga'a territories was not extinguished.

1982 Constitution Act. Aboriginal Rights are outlined in Section 25 of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms and in Section 35 and 35.1.

1990 Sparrow case. Affirms aboriginal fishing rights.

1992 Creation of the BC Treaty Commission.

1996 Royal Commission on Aboriginal People.

1997 Delgamuukw case. Defines aboriginal title.

1999 Sechelt Agreement in Principle is signed marking the beginning of talks to conclude a treaty.

2000 Nisga'a Treaty becomes law.

2003 Lheidli T'enneh Band (Prince George), Maa-nulth First Nations (Vancouver Island) and Sliammon Indian Band sign agreements in principle marking the beginning of talks to conclude a treaty.

2004 Haida Nation and Taku River Tlingit cases.
Tsawwassen First Nation signs an agreement in principle.

2005 Kelowna Accord established. Provides a framework for workings among First Nations, federal and provincial governments.
Bernard and Marshall cases. Supreme Court of Canada rejects the Mi'kmaq claimed treaty right to harvest trees.
Yekooche Nation signs an agreement in principle.

2006 New Relationship Trust Act. Designed to start a new relationship between government and First Nations.
Kelowna Accord implementation impacted. Federal government indicates that it will not fund specific commitments contained in the accord.

Forging a new reality based on respect and recognition of First Nations title and rights is the first step toward a healthier new world. Treaties, legal claims, co-management agreements, memoranda of understanding, community-based initiatives, and other agreements between First Nations, government, the private sector, and civic organizations can potentially establish the trust we need to move forward.

building a new world

A SHARED VISION — If we are going to create new relationships, we must develop a shared vision that celebrates our differences as well as our common ground. A collective vision statement will help us identify key issues and develop shared goals, action plans, and processes, and commit to shared decision-making. Any part of society wanting to work with First Nations people, from individuals to corporations, needs a sincere desire to resolve issues and to develop a heightened level of awareness of First Nations ways. Training, workshops, information sharing, and mutual support are all useful in creating trusting, respectful, open, and flexible communication. Let's work together for a brilliant future.

Understanding the history of First Nations people and the historical interaction between cultures and communities gives us the context to examine current issues and conflicts in BC and Canada. In order to comprehend the present, and to prepare for a sustainable future, we can look to the past for answers. Understanding the path we have taken, and deciding what new steps we can take together today, will help us move forward into a stronger future.

the past matters

WHAT CAN HISTORY TEACH US?

We can take two important lessons from our collective history:

1} First Nations have an intimate connection to the land and its resources that is as strong today as it was in the past. We need to respect First Nations traditional knowledge, title and rights.

2} To ensure a prosperous future for First Nations, and for all residents of the Fraser River Basin, we need to work together and build bridges between our communities.

WHY BUILD BRIDGES?

The Fraser River Basin is the heartland of British Columbia. Stretching from the base of Mount Robson in BC's Rocky Mountains to the Strait of Georgia, it is the fifth largest drainage basin in Canada. Renowned for its beauty, resources, and diverse peoples, the Basin is home to 2.6 million British Columbians. The population is expected to rise to 4 million people over the next 30 years. It will soon be a huge challenge to integrate our social, economic, environmental, and institutional needs.

The sustainability issues we face include poor air and water quality, climate change, invasive plant species, diminished fish and wildlife habitat, the mountain pine beetle epidemic, declining agricultural lands, and potential flooding of the Fraser River. These issues have a direct impact on the health of the entire Fraser River Basin. These are our problems. Learning from First Nations about their traditional teachings and approach to sustainability is one step towards a solution.

One step closer

The Fraser Basin Council has a role to work to build partnerships among many of BC's communities including First Nations. We are working toward a Fraser River Basin where social well-being is supported by a vibrant economy and sustained by a healthy environment.

THE FRASER BASIN COUNCIL

The Fraser Basin Council (FBC) is a unique organization that is focused on advancing sustainability throughout the entire Fraser River Basin. Since it was established in 1997, the FBC has played a key leadership role in resolving conflicts and educating the public about sustainability. Today, the FBC is actively involved in resolving issues that affect all people who live in the Fraser River Basin. The FBC remains impartial, non-partisan, independent, and non-political in its primary role as an advocate.

The Fraser Basin Council recognizes that First Nations within the Fraser River Basin assert Aboriginal rights and title. These rights and title must be acknowledged and reconciled in a just and fair manner. The FBC believes:

1} That First Nations shall have input into all activities the FBC undertakes toward achieving a more sustainable Fraser River Basin.

2} That these are not just First Nations issues, but sustainability issues that affect all people.

3} Both First Nations and non-Aboriginal engagement is needed to achieve sustainability.

DID YOU KNOW? ONE OF THE FRASER BASIN COUNCIL'S GOALS IS TO IMPROVE LOCAL EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES FOR ABORIGINALS AND NON-ABORIGINALS, AND TO ENHANCE THE SOCIAL HEALTH OF CITIZENS AND COMMUNITIES. THE FBC RECENTLY DEVELOPED THE ABORIGINAL FORESTRY DIRECTORY FOR THE CARIBOO CHILCOTIN THAT LISTS ALL FIRST NATIONS AND MÉTIS ORGANIZATIONS AND COMPANIES IN THE CARIBOO CHILCOTIN THAT HAVE FORESTRY SKILLS AND EXPERIENCE. THE DIRECTORY IS INTENDED TO BE INTERACTIVE IN ORDER TO ENSURE ACCURATE AND CURRENT INFORMATION. THE DIRECTORY INCLUDES CONTACT INFORMATION, TYPES OF FORESTRY SKILLS (HARVESTING, SILVICULTURE, PLANNING), EQUIPMENT TYPES, GEOGRAPHIC LOCATIONS, AND CAPABILITIES TO TAKE ON ADDITIONAL WORK. THE DIRECTORY IS HOSTED ON THE INDEPENDENT WEBSITE: WWW.ABORIGINALFORESTINFO.CA

Important FBC guidelines for working with Aboriginals

The purpose of these guidelines is to articulate respect for Aboriginal perspectives and contributions to sustainability in the Fraser River Basin. The Guidelines have been developed by and for the Fraser Basin Council (FBC), and are based on the Fraser Basin Council's Charter for Sustainability. The 11th principle states:

"We recognize that Aboriginal nations within the Fraser Basin assert Aboriginal rights and title. These rights and title now being defined must be acknowledged and reconciled in a just and fair manner."

SUSTAINABILITY: The FBC is committed to achieving a vision for the Basin where social well-being is supported by a vibrant economy and a healthy environment.

RESPECT AND EQUITY: The FBC respects the diverse values, cultures, interests and knowledge of all communities and regions in the Basin, and is committed to supporting equitable opportunities for achieving sustainability.

INCLUSIVE DECISION-MAKING: The FBC acknowledges Aboriginal governments as an order of Canadian government and strives to support coordinated and cooperative efforts among all government and non-government interests.

MEANINGFUL ENGAGEMENT: The FBC supports opportunities for meaningful Aboriginal involvement in all relevant activities the Council undertakes toward achieving a more sustainable Fraser River Basin. Parties are encouraged to develop a common understanding of and shared expectations for meaningful involvement, and identify and address capacity challenges and opportunities related to involvement.

INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY – TRADITIONAL AND LOCAL KNOWLEDGE: The FBC acknowledges the value and significance of traditional and local knowledge, and respects the important linkage between traditional knowledge and Aboriginal rights. The FBC recognizes that incorporation of traditional and local knowledge is integral to ensuring sustainable management. The FBC promotes wider application of the interpretation of traditional and local knowledge, with the approval and involvement of the knowledge holders. The FBC also honours confidentiality and limited conditions of information release. Information will remain the property of knowledge holders.

COMMUNICATION AND COOPERATION: The FBC is committed to fostering frequent and open communication, information exchange, and inclusive dialogue to develop shared solutions to sustainability challenges. The FBC's work does not entail consultation in the legal sense.

information sources

To learn more about First Nations and how to create an environment of mutual understanding and respect, start by visiting these sites:

Assembly of First Nations – **www.afn.ca**
BC Assembly of First Nations – **www.bcafn.ca**
BC Métis Nation – **www.mnbc.ca**
BC Ministry of Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation – **www.aaf.gov.bc.ca/aaf**
BC Treaty Commission – **www.bctreaty.net**
First Nations Summit – **www.fns.bc.ca**
Fraser Basin Council – **www.fraserbasin.bc.ca**
Indian and Northern Affairs Canada – **www.inac.gc.ca/index_e.html**
Union of BC Indian Chiefs – **www.ubcic.bc.ca**
Union of BC Municipalities – **www.civicnet.bc.ca**

With Thanks from The Fraser Basin Council – We are grateful to all of you who have contributed to making this publication possible. It is our goal and desire to honour your words and contributions in a meaningful way. We would especially like to offer a special thanks to Donna L. Atkinson for her research and historical contributions.

ECO AUDIT – 2.74 Trees preserved for the future, 3.59 kg waterborne waste not created, 4.411 liter waste / water flow saved, 58 kg solid waste not generated, 115 kg net greenhouse gases prevented and 1,943,222 BTUs energy not consumed.

REFERENCES & RECOMMENDED READING

Armstrong, J., D. Derickson, L., Maracle, and G. Young-Ing. *We Get Our Living Like Milk from the Land.* Penticton: Theytus Books, 1993.

Birchwater, Sage. *Ulkatcho: Stories of the Grease Trail.* Anahim Lake: Ulkatcho Cultural Curriculum Committee, 1993.

Campbell, Kenneth. *BC First Nations Studies.* Victoria: BC Ministry of Education, 2003.

Coull, Cheryl. *A Traveller's Guide to Aboriginal BC.* Vancouver: Whitecap Books, 1996.

Cropped Ear Wolf, Annabel. *Shuswap History: A Century of Change.* Kamloops: Secwepemc Cultural Education Society, 1996.

Duff, Wilson. *The Indian History of British Columbia: The Impact of the White Man.* Victoria: The Royal British Columbia Museum, 1964.

Fisher, Robin. *Contact and Conflict: Indian-European Relations in British Columbia, 1774-1890.* Vancouver: UBC Press, 1977.

Harris, Cole. *Making Native Space: Colonialism, Resistance, and Reserves in British Columbia.* Vancouver: UBC Press, 2002.

Hayden, Brian, ed. *A Complex Culture of the British Columbia Plateau: Traditional Stl'atl'imxResource Use.* Vancouver: UBC Press, 1992.

Muckle, Robert J. *The First Nations of British Columbia: An Anthropological Survey.* Vancouver: UBC Press, 1998.

Smith, Trefor. *Our Stories are Written on the Land: A Brief History of the Upper St'at'imc: 1800-1940.* Lillooet: Upper St'at'imc Language, Culture and Education Society, 1998.

The New Relationship (November 25, 2005) www.gov.bc/arr/down/new_relationship.pdf

Trigger, Bruce G. *Natives and Newcomers: Canada's "Heroic Age" Reconsidered.* Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1985.

PHOTOGRAPHY CREDITS

Pg 2	Detail of British Columbia Archives	G-04397
Pg 3	British Columbia Archives	B-01350
Pg 3	Detail of British Columbia Archives	I-29074
Pg 12	British Columbia Archives	C-08803
Pg 12	Detail of British Columbia Archives	F-05394
Pg 13	Detail of British Columbia Archives	I-29076
Pg 14	Detail of British Columbia Archives	F-08914
Pg 17	British Columbia Archives	H-03359
Pg 17	Detail of British Columbia Archives	D-00489

“Even though we represent many different First Nation cultures and traditions, we all agree on one basic teaching: We were put here by the Creator to care for this land we call Mother Earth. This means we have a responsibility to maintain good relations with all of her creation.”

— ASSEMBLY OF FIRST NATIONS, 1993

"Social well-being supported by a vibrant economy and sustained by a healthy environment."

1st Floor, 470 Granville Street
Vancouver, BC V6C 1V5
Tel: 604-488-5350
Fax: 604-488-5351
info@fraserbasin.bc.ca

Fraser Basin Council

www.fraserbasin.bc.ca