



TSLEIL-WAUTUTH NATION
THE PEOPLE OF THE INLET

Media Backgrounder

West Coast Oil Pipeline Summit and

Signing of International Treaty to Protect the Sacred From Tar Sands Projects

Friday, April 19, 2013, Sheraton Vancouver Wall Centre Hotel

Tsleil-Waututh means “People of the Inlet”.

The Tsleil-Waututh Nation (pronounced Slayl-wah-tuth) is a closely knit, supportive and progressive community located on the north shore of Burrard Inlet near the neighbourhood of Deep Cove. The Nation is Coast Salish, with its own distinct customs, history and language called Downriver Halkomelem.

Tsleil-Waututh’s traditional territory with its land and waters has been home to the Nation since time out of mind and encompasses approximately 190,000 hectares (720 square miles) stretching from the Fraser River in the south, to Mamquam Lake east of Whistler Mountain in the north. It includes spectacular forest areas, glacier capped mountain peaks, productive salmon streams, and now the dense urban settlement of Greater Vancouver.

Generations of Tsleil-Waututh men, women and children acquired intimate knowledge of this traditional territory’s rich natural resources over thousands of years.

In a yearly round of activities, a great variety of foods were harvested and preserved, villages and camps were maintained, and complex networks of trade conducted. The bounty of Tsleil-Waututh territory, and the resourcefulness of the Tsleil Waututh people, created a culture that is vital, dynamic, and sustainable.

At one time, the Tsleil-Waututh Nation was great in numbers and presence, but the devastation of smallpox in the mid-1850s decimated its population from 10,000 to a mere handful in just a few years.

The Tsleil-Waututh Nation Today

Today, Tsleil-Waututh is a growing community of 500, with about half the population living on Burrard Inlet Indian Reserve #3, the community’s government-assigned name.

The Tsleil-Waututh Nation is governed by five elected councillors, one Chief, and a traditional family system of representation by all nine family groups. The Nation’s administration employs a staff of over 60 to serve the needs of the community.

Due to its traditional role as stewards of the land, one of the Nation’s priorities continues to be the environmental protection of its territory.

The Tsleil-Waututh Nation is not opposed to development, rather it focuses on sustainable projects and methodologies.

The Nation has been active in economic development for 20 years. Projects include the residential condominium and townhouse at community called Raven Woods, the Takaya Golf Centre, Takaya Tours, TWN Wind Power, a public day care, a community centre, and a host of joint ventures, community programs and services.

Tsleil-Waututh’s sacred trust to the land and water is reflected in the Nation’s expanding participation in all planning and development processes within the traditional territory, so that the once abundant resources can be restored, protected, and utilized on a sustainable basis.

Tsleil-Waututh has purchased nearly 800 acres of forested lands within its traditional territory and is engaged in the practice of sustainable forest management. The Nation has also implemented a marine stewardship program to assess pollution in the Inlet, and has conducted salmon enhancement programs to return a balance to traditional waterways.



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Tsleil-Waututh's Future

It is the Tsleil-Waututh ancestors who shared that all human beings, animals, and resources have their place. The ancestors recognized that we are all connected as human beings. With this in mind, the Tsleil-Waututh Nation continues to be visible and active in its urbanized setting. The Nation looks for new partnerships, new opportunities, and new ways to share its history and values. The Nation sees great opportunity in moving forward while celebrating its rich culture, in addition to building a strong healthy economy and community.

"We know where we come from and we know who we are. We are looking forward." (Tsleil-Waututh Nation Declaration, 1997)

The Tsleil-Waututh Nation's Sacred Trust

The Tsleil-Waututh Nation has been shaped by their intimate connection to the lands and waters of their territory. They have a *sacred trust*, a responsibility to care for their traditional territory, and to restore it to its former state. This stewardship of the land, air, and water is so deeply ingrained in Tsleil-Waututh culture because they understand that the health of their people is interconnected with the environment.

The traditional territory of the Tsleil-Waututh Nation was a veritable land of plenty. It was said that *when the tide went out, the table was set*. While this territory was never ceded, nor the Nation's responsibility to this area ever abdicated, its resources have been exploited and damaged through industrialization and urbanization.

It is now, and has always been, the birthright and the obligation of the Tsleil-Waututh people to care for the lands and waters of their territory and to restore them to their prior state. It is through the fulfillment of this vision that that future generations of Tsleil-Waututh thrive.

About the Kinder Morgan Pipeline Expansion

Kinder Morgan is proposing to expand their existing Trans Mountain Pipeline.

The pipeline runs nearly 1,100 km from Edmonton to end at the Westridge Terminal in the Burrard Inlet, the core of Tsleil-Waututh territory. The proposed expansion project would see the amount of oil travelling across BC for refinement overseas more than double from 300,000 to 890,000 barrels per day, and a drastic increase in tanker traffic, from the 30 to 70 conventional tankers that traverse Burrard Inlet each year currently to around 350 super tankers annually. The bitumen extracted from the Alberta tar sands and transported by pipeline and tanker is not being refined to meet the energy needs of Canada or British Columbia; rather, its final destination is Asia.

International Treaty to Protect the Sacred from the Tar Sands Projects

The Tsleil-Waututh have an inherent obligation to protect their territory and to call awareness to the serious risks associated with Kinder Morgan's pipeline expansion.

On Friday, April 19 at 12:30 pm the Tsleil-Waututh Nation will join more than ten US Nations and Tribes in opposition to the expansion of tar sands infrastructure expansion and to raise awareness for the environmental threats posed.

The Treaty was first signed in January of 2013 and, as it garners more support, continues to build momentum.



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Indigenous sovereign nations have a long history of treaty making amongst themselves. Many pertain to peace and friendship and to the protection of Mother Earth. In January and on the 150 year anniversary of the Treaty Between the Pawnee and Yankton Sioux, the representatives from sovereign Indigenous Nations, tribes, and governments, participated on Ihanktonwan homelands in the Gathering to Protect the Sacred on January 23 – 25, 2013 and resolved by their free, prior, and informed consent to enter into a treaty to be forever respected and protected.

In the Treaty, the undersigned agreed that tar sands projects present unacceptable risks to the soil, the waters, the air, sacred sites, and the Nations and Tribes ways of life.

The signing of the International Treaty to Protect the Sacred from the Tar Sands Project will precede the West Coast Oil Pipeline Summit and will take place at the Sheraton Wall Centre Hotel at 12:30 pm.

Chief Maureen Thomas will sign on behalf of the Tsleil-Waututh Nation. The signing will be witnessed by National Chief Shawn A-in-chut Atleo, Assembly of First Nations.

Also in attendance will be Mel Sheldon, Chairman and Deborah Parker, Vice Chairwomen of Tulalip Tribes, Chief Phil Lane Jr., Hereditary Chief and Elder of the Ihanktonwan Dakota and Chickasaw Nations and Jewell Praying Wolf James of the Lummi Nation.

More About the Treaty

Indigenous Nations from across the United States and Canada and their Allies converged at the Yankton Sioux Reservation, South Dakota for a historical event, “Gathering to Protect the Sacred from the Tar Sands and Keystone XL.” This took place on January 23rd-25th, 2013 and was held at the Ft. Randall Hotel and Casino in South Dakota.

Those authorized representatives and their allies attending signed an International Treaty to effectively block the Keystone XL TransCanada Pipeline. Representatives of Indigenous Nations and their Allies including farmers and ranchers, business and environmental leaders, leading treaty and environmental lawyers, news media, and other concerned citizens gathered for this unprecedented unified action.

This International Treaty to Protect the Sacred from Tar Sands and Keystone XL builds upon the Save the Fraser River Declaration, the Rights of Mother Earth Accord, Indigenous Leaders Spiritual Declaration, the Earth Charter, and the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. This International Treaty between Indigenous Nations is grounded in the January 23rd, 1863 Pawnee Nation and Ihanktonwan Dakota / Nakota Peace Treaty. Witnessed by representatives of the Ponca Nation and the United States government this was the first written Peace Treaty between Indian Nations in history.

The Gathering was opened by a Sacred Ceremony to honor the Treaty of 1863 as well as to formalize a united stand by the Pawnee Nation and the Yankton Sioux Tribe to stop the Keystone XL Pipeline. With this legal and spiritual foundation other Indigenous Nations and Allies united at the conclusion of the Gathering in the signing of the International Treaty to Protect the Sacred from Tar Sands and Keystone XL.



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At the Gathering to Protect the Sacred from Tar Sands Projects, we joined in solidarity and unprecedented unity and:

- Honored all Indigenous First Nations, Tribes, Allies, and the Enduring Unity of the Oceti Sakowin, the Great Sioux Nation, and commemorated and honored the 150th Anniversary and reaffirmed the January 23, 1863 Peace Treaty between the Ihanktonwan and Pawnee Nations that was witnessed by the Ponca Nation and the United States Government. This Treaty has never been broken for more than 150 years.
- Notified President Obama and the U.S. Government that the approval of the Keystone XL pipeline would be a further grave abrogation of the January 23, 1863 Treaty and possibly other related treaties and would have very regrettable consequences. For instance, on December 21st 2012 by Resolution, the Black Hills Sioux Nation Treaty Council also stated they were "vehemently opposed to the construction of the TransCanada/Keystone XL Pipeline Project on any Aboriginal or Treaty lands."
- Held a Ceremonial Grand Council to Affirm a Unifying International Treaty between Indigenous Peoples and All Our Allies Who Seek to Protect the Sacred from the Tar Sands and the Keystone XL Pipeline. This International Treaty builds upon the Save the Fraser River Declaration, Rights of Mother Earth Accord, Indigenous Leaders Spiritual Declaration, the Sixteen Guiding Principles for Building a Harmonious World, the Coastal First Nations Declaration, and the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.
- Built the Foundation for a Spiritually-Grounded, Principle-Centered Interdependent Campaign for Unprecedented Unified Action to Protect Our Sacred Mother Earth.

About the West Coast Oil Pipeline Summit

Tsleil-Waututh will host the West Coast Oil Summit and Gala Dinner at the Sheraton Vancouver Wall Centre Hotel on April 19th, 2013 from 2 pm to midnight.

With support from the Cities of Vancouver and Burnaby, the event is designed to stimulate discussion, explore clean energy alternatives, and raise public awareness about the expansion of the Canadian tar sands and oil industry transportation infrastructure.

Conference delegates will hear from a range of speakers including Chief Maureen Thomas, Tsleil-Waututh Nation, Mayor Gregor Robertson, City of Vancouver, Mayor Derek Corrigan, City of Burnaby, Economist Robyn Allan, formerly Senior Economist for BC Central Credit Union, Miles Richardson, David Suzuki Foundation, Paul Kariya, Clean Energy BC and Grand Chief Stewart Phillips, Union of BC Indian Chiefs.

Registration fee is \$100. To register, go to www.twnation.ca.

Media Contact:

Hollie Latulippe, Manager Communications
Raven Events and Communications

hollie@ravenevents.ca

1 (604) 312-3498