

A sunset scene with a warm orange and red sky. In the foreground, there are silhouettes of a person standing on a log and a bird perched on a branch. The water below reflects the sky and the silhouettes.

bridge between nations

A HISTORY OF FIRST NATIONS IN THE FRASER RIVER BASIN

Presented by The Fraser Basin Council

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. The story of any people is, of course, complex. This booklet touches on only a few of the many historical, political, social, legal and economic issues that shape the lives of First Nations people today. It is intended to encourage greater communication, understanding and respect between Aboriginal and Non-Aboriginal peoples. There is an opportunity before us to build a bridge between nations, for the benefit of all. Thank you for joining us on this journey.

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 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 all inherited our respective cultural values, which have been handed down to us through the generations. Through our languages and oral stories, we maintain our special relationship to the land and natural resources. As our roles and responsibilities are challenged, we

maintain our cultural values by integrating those values within our contemporary environment. We seek collaboration and coordination between our Nations and others.

There is a global message for those relying on Western scientific knowledge, and that is to embrace our respective traditional ecological knowledge and experiences. Our Mother Earth is in a dilemma and we can no longer afford to ignore the consequences. We must make every effort to collaborate and continue with dialogue on the issue of sustainability as a people living on Mother Earth.

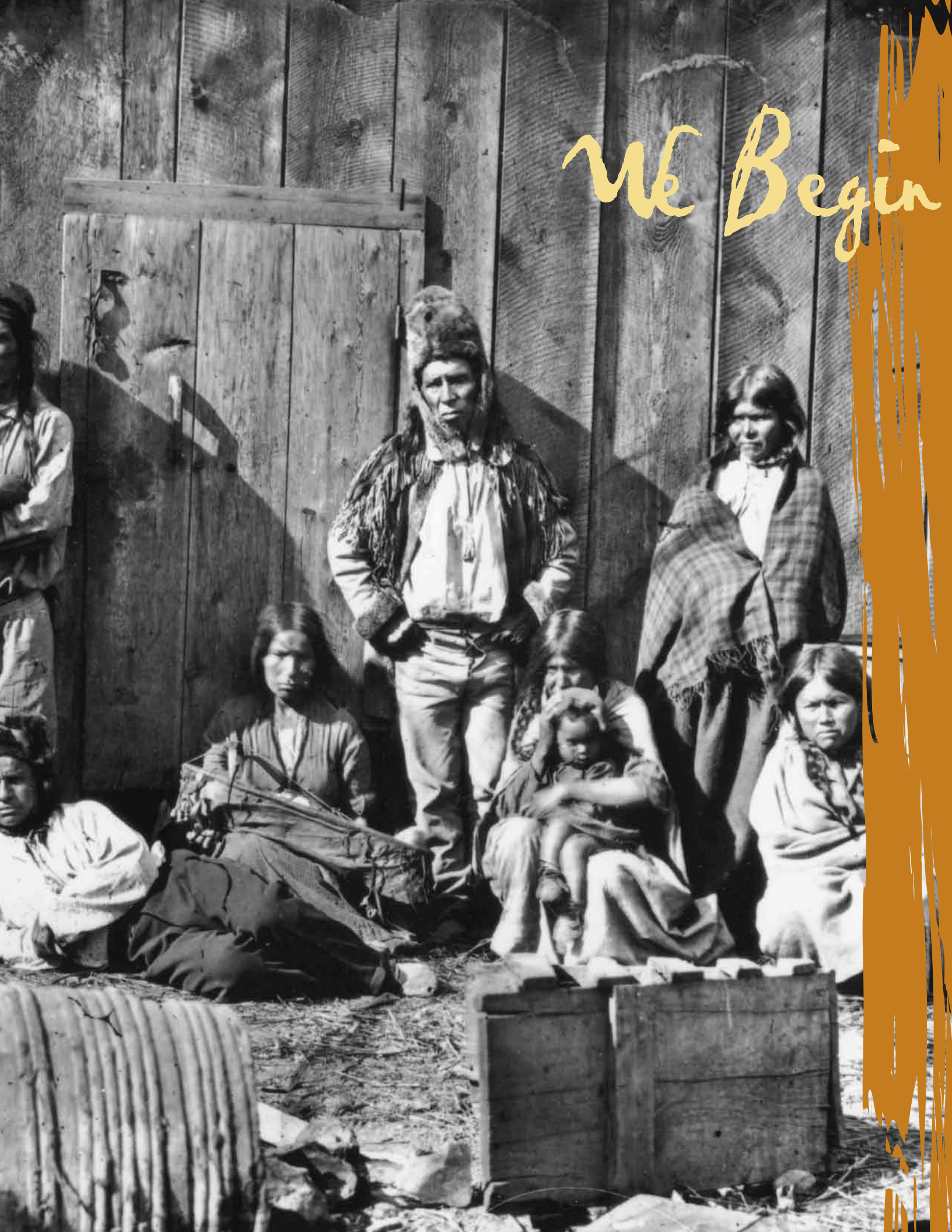
WE MUST:

- Show respect for traditions and protect Mother Earth.
- Educate ourselves and others on how our indigenous communities are experiencing unbalanced effects, as compared to the general population.
- Exercise our inherent rights, as well as embrace our responsibilities in exercising those inherent rights.
- Through our languages and oral stories, develop proper protocols in our relationship with governments and non-governmental agencies.

Our indigenous knowledge shows us how we must respect Mother Earth. This knowledge provides us with cultural principles for our future generations to embrace and make things right. We need to make decisions based on relationships that we develop; these relationships will allow us to have dialogue for creative ideas around sustainability that encompass social, economic, political and traditional values.

GEORGE SADDLEMAN — *Past Director, Fraser Basin Council and member, Fraser Basin Council Society*

We Begin



at the Beginning

Our story begins with an introduction to First Nations across the Fraser Basin — what they have in common and some of the social and cultural values unique to each.

WHAT'S IN A NAME?

Aboriginal people of Canada encompass three groups — First Nations, Inuit and Métis — who are the original peoples of this country and their descendants. 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.

Together Aboriginal people make up almost 5% of the population of BC.

While Aboriginal people live within the borders of Canada, many maintain the existence of their Aboriginal rights and title.

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*. As of 2006* there were 110,550 status Indians and 28,880 non-status Indians in BC. Registering can affect a status individual's residence, taxation and education.

Although the term “Indian” is still used in federal legislation, the more respectful term “First Nations” has been in common use since the 1970s to refer to these first peoples of Canada.

*2006 CENSUS DATA. SEE ALSO 2011 CENSUS DATA, AVAILABLE ONLINE BEGINNING MAY 2013.



→ **DID YOU KNOW?** ← IN ADDITION TO FIRST NATIONS, THERE ARE 630 INUIT PEOPLE, 54,190 MÉTIS PEOPLE AND 1,145 PEOPLE OF MORE THAN ONE ABORIGINAL IDENTITY LIVING IN BC (2006 CENSUS).

Everything is



Everything

Languages, beliefs and stories of creation are specific to each First Nation. The meaning of beliefs and stories are passed down through generations. There is, however, one unifying theme that is common to 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 will 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 origin of peoples. They also serve to illustrate and instruct on moral and social conventions as well as traditional customs. These myths are important to understanding social organization, kinship, status and art.

MORE THAN MEETS THE EYE

Popular First Nations myths focus on deceptive, mischievous and sacred creatures called “transformers.” These are tricksters, often taking the form of a raven or coyote, and can turn themselves and others into objects, animals or anything else they wish. 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 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 WHAT IS NOW BRITISH COLUMBIA 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, rich in natural resources and home to many people. The natural gifts of the land stem from the Fraser River, a source of life that has always connected First Nations, as it does so many people in the province today. The culture of each of the First Nations adds colour to our diverse landscape. Let us journey up from the mouth of the Fraser to meet some of the First Nations people along the way.

COAST SALISH

The Coast Salish* people 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.

* Coast Salish is a modern, non-traditional term used to describe a diverse group of people that share a language family.

→ **DID YOU KNOW?** ← The Stó:lō (a Coast Salish people) take their name from the word they give the river, deriving their traditions from it. Stó:lō 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:lō territory transforming people into resources, including salmon, sturgeon, beaver, stones, mountains and trees. Because the resources were once people, they are to be respected. The Stó:lō 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 traditionally 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 that was 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.

TSILHQOT'IN

The traditional territory of the Tsilhqot'in (pronounced Tsilko-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 Tsilhqot'in language is an Athabaskan language. In their language, the name Tsilhqot'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.



SECWPEMC

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.

⇒ **DID YOU KNOW?** ⇐ In 1910 the Secwepemc, along with other interior nations, signed and presented the Sir Wilfrid Laurier Memorial. This is a historical document written from the First Nations point of view to outline 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) or Sylix people have an enduring relationship with the land from Mica Creek in the north to Wilbur, Washington in the south, and from from Kootenay Lake in the east to the Nicola Valley in the west — an area of 69,000 square kilometres. Theirs is an Interior Salish language known as Nsyilxcən and sometimes called Okanagan.

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 many generations.

⇒ **DID YOU KNOW?** ⇐ The Okanagan people (like many other First Nations 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.

ST'ÁT'IMC

Previously known as Lillooet Indians, the St'át'imc (pronounced Stat-lee-um) 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 (St'at'imcets) is a branch of Interior Salish that is divided into the upper Fraser River dialect and the lower Lillooet River dialect.

St'át'imc 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 St'át'imc children as part of their inheritance.

⇒ **DID YOU KNOW?** ⇐ In 1911 a committee of St'át'imc Chiefs signed a declaration at Spences Bridge asserting sovereignty over St'át'imc 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.

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 rediscovered, 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 Athabaskan-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, such as through

the practice of 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 Athabaskan 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 transported 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

WET'SUWET'EN

DAKELH

TSILHQOT'IN

SECWEPEMC

ST'ÁT'IMC

NLAKA'PAMUX

COAST SALISH

OKANAGAN

Canada
U.S.A.

communication builds community

Languages connect people. A symbol of identity, language is the way people share social, cultural and spiritual values, as well as aspirations for the future. First Nations languages are important in these respects. And through these languages come messages about sustainability — the importance of 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 a history of colonization and cultural assimilation.

First Nations, federal and provincial governments, along with educational institutions, have made a concerted effort over the past 40 years to revive First Nations languages. Together they have launched awareness campaigns, school programs, cultural camps, classes, an oral history collection and online learning resources.

To maintain and cultivate effective and meaningful communication with First Nations communities, the revitalization of First Nations languages must be given high priority.

LANGUAGES OF THE FRASER BASIN

First Nations languages were not traditionally written or recorded, 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, Dene (Athabaskan), Haida, Ktunaxa, Salishan, Tlingit, Tsimshian and Wakashan. Each of these families has one or more member languages and distinct dialects. Dene (Athabaskan) 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 in the cultures and practices of different First Nations, all traditionally have a strong sense of family.



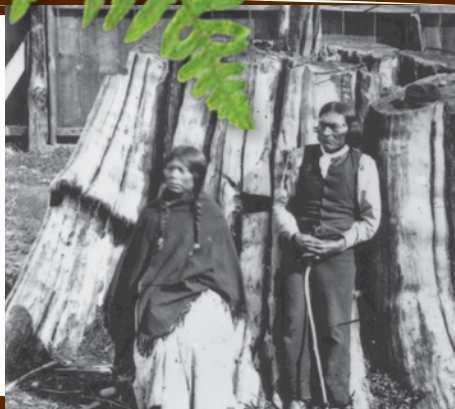
The Coast Salish people represent one of the culture areas within the Fraser River Basin, commonly referred to by ethnographers as the Northwest Coast (in terms of its relationship to North America as a whole). In this culture area, a hereditary chief leads the community in a matrilineal social structure – based on kinship with mothers. People are organized into houses composed 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, and traditionally the largest population of First Nations, along with the greatest variety of languages and customs.

The Nlaka'pamux, Okanagan, Secwepemc, St'át'imc 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 Pacific coastal areas to the west. Villages, usually located along riverbanks, became the main political units. The villages were composed 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 guidelines to help understand some cultural similarities and differences.



SETTLEMENT

The types of homes in which First Nations people traditionally lived, as well as how long people settled in a particular place, depended on local culture and the natural environment. Those living in the Northwest Coast culture area generally lived in dwellings called Big Houses, grouped into communities 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 travelled 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. 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.

First Nations used many unique fishing tools such as weirs, basket traps, dip nets, gill nets and spears to catch sturgeon, cod, trout, eulachon and salmon. Salmon were prized above all other fish and were 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; people 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, forced First Nations to compete for food with European settlers and in some cases other groups of First Nations. Today, First Nations 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 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. Traditional ecological knowledge can help everyone understand the larger world and where human beings fit within it.

Ruby Dunstan, a Nlaka'pamux Elder, spoke of the philosophy this way:

"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 an intimate understanding of the land and its resources. By recognizing the value of Aboriginal traditional ecological knowledge and by working to integrate it with non-Aboriginal perspectives on land and water stewardship, Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people can work together as equals. This is an opportunity to plan a more sustainable future for the benefit of all residents of the Fraser Basin.





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 has grown. We understand they 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 Nuu-chah-nulth people. Over the next 25 years, explorers from England, Spain, Russia and France also visited.

of Nations

THE FUR TRADE

There are two periods of the fur trade: the maritime trade, which began after first contact in 1774, and the land-based fur trade, which 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 up 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 exercise a large degree 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 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 people 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 took a devastating toll, killing many people. Population estimates suggest that First Nations dwindled from around 250,000 people in the mid-1700s to roughly 28,000 by 1885.



THE CHILCOTIN WAR

Conflicts between First Nations and Europeans settlers over land, resources and ownership rights in Tsilhqot'in traditional territory led to the Chilcotin War of 1864. After surviving two smallpox outbreaks, the struggling Tsilhqot'in travelled 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 representatives of 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. Some 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:lō, 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 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. Understanding this history can provide insights for healing the past and building relationships for the future.

TREATIES

The Royal Proclamation of 1763 recognized Aboriginal title and set the stage for a process of negotiating treaties as it acknowledged the fact that First Nations owned their lands until such time as the lands were ceded or sold. The Royal Proclamation prohibited settlers from claiming or buying land from First Nations, and established a system whereby the land would first have to be purchased by the Crown.

In the 1850s, Governor James Douglas sought to settle First Nations land rights. Between 1850 and 1854 Douglas negotiated 14 treaties with First Nations on Vancouver Island. Treaty 8 was a treaty settlement negotiated in 1899 between the Government of Canada and First Nations in northern Alberta, northwestern Saskatchewan, southern Northwest Territories and northeastern BC.

After the Douglas Treaties, the BC government did not participate in any further treaty 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). The final agreement came into effect in 2000 as the first modern land agreement in the province.

MISSIONARIES

Many First Nations people in BC lost part of their connection to their traditional culture and practices when they converted to Christianity through the work of missionaries. Decades of disease, depopulation and alienation from traditional lifestyles accelerated the objective of conversion in many areas. In some cases, First Nations were forced to convert in order to access vaccines against smallpox and other diseases. In spite of less than positive beginnings, many First Nations people worked to integrate their traditional teachings with the philosophies of Christianity, and to pass this along to their children.

RESIDENTIAL SCHOOLS

The introduction of residential schools operated by Roman Catholic, Anglican, Methodist, Baptist, Presbyterian and United Churches in BC, beginning in the 1860s, 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, cooking, sewing and cleaning.

Residential schools broke apart many families, destroyed many languages and alienated many people from their heritage. In 2006 the Government of Canada announced a nation-wide compensation package for residential school survivors. The Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement is the largest class action settlement in Canadian history, negotiated by various counsel for the Government of Canada, the former students of Indian residential schools, the churches involved in running those schools, the Assembly of First Nations and other Aboriginal organizations.

The Agreement provides for financial compensation to former students, including compensation for sexual or serious physical abuse. In BC over 6,700 claims were made through this process, and over 60% of these were resolved as of January 2013. In addition to compensation payments, the Agreement supports measures for healing, the commemoration of former students and their families, and creation of a Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

➔ **DID YOU KNOW?** ➔ The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada began work in 2008 to discover and document the truth of the Indian residential school system and its impacts, to compile a comprehensive historical record, and to create public awareness among Canadians. The Commission has offered residential school survivors and others an opportunity to share their experiences. The intent is to contribute to truth, healing and reconciliation.

Aboriginal-state relations

THE INDIAN ACT

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. Courts have since clarified that the federal government also has jurisdiction for relations with Inuit (1939 Supreme Court of Canada decision) and with Métis and non-status Indians (2013 Federal Court of Canada decision). The federal government, in an attempt to administer relations, created the Department of Indian Affairs (now called Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada) and in 1876 enacted the first *Indian Act*.

The *Indian Act* sought to regulate Indian status, reserve lands, education, local government, taxation, and cultural, political and socio-economic activities. The Act has undergone numerous changes, including in 1951 when it was amended to address clauses banning potlatches and the pursuit of land claims, and in 1985 when it was amended to address the nullification of status for First Nations women who married non-Indians. A further amendment came into effect in 2011 to protect the status eligibility of the grandchildren of women who had previously lost status.

THE NEW RELATIONSHIP TRUST

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, BC Assembly of First Nations, First Nations Leadership Council and BC Government.

TREATY COMMISSION

In 2012 the Treaty Commission of BC marked its 20th anniversary, with 60 First Nations (representing 104 bands) in the treaty process. By early 2013, two treaties had been implemented — with Tsawwassen First Nation and Maa-nulth First Nations (on behalf of five nations). Of the other Nations, three had completed final agreements, 12 were in advanced stages of the process, 23 were in active negotiations and 20 were not then in negotiations. Of the three completed final agreements, one was rejected in a community vote (Lheidli T'enneh First Nation) and two (Tla'amin First Nation and Yale First Nation) were awaiting final federal approval as of early 2013. A 2011 review (Lornie report) recommended ways to accelerate the treaty process, and encouraged the federal government to make treaty-making a priority.

➤ **DID YOU KNOW?** ◀ In 2009 the Tsawwassen First Nation Final Agreement came into effect. This is the first urban treaty in BC history and first modern treaty negotiated under the BC Treaty Commission process. In addressing the BC Legislature in 2007, Chief Kim Baird said, “*In my view, one of the important things this treaty achieves is a new relationship between Tsawwassen, British Columbia and Canada. It achieves reconciliation. I mean true reconciliation. To me, true reconciliation signifies real action and tangible change.*”

1763	The Royal Proclamation of 1763. Declared by King George III, to maintain peace and provide order, it 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.
1850	1850–1854: Douglas treaties (14 agreements) concluded with First Nations on Vancouver Island.
1858	Colony of British Columbia created. Treaty and reserve establishment takes root.
1864	Chilcotin War. 15 non-Aboriginal men killed and six Tsilhqot'in men hanged.
1867	Confederation of Canada
1871	The Colony of British Columbia joins Canada.
1876	<i>Indian Act</i> passed by Canada's Parliament. Act regulates most aspects of First Nations life.
1880	Department of Indian Affairs created to oversee implementation of <i>Indian Act</i> . • Many Indian residential schools operational in BC, focused on assimilation of Aboriginal children.
1885	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 demand that the land question be settled.
1912	The Royal Commission on Indian 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 <i>Indian Act</i> 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.
1951	<i>Indian Act</i> amended, removing provisions that had banned the potlatch and other cultural celebrations and the pursuit of land claims.
1960	First Nations are allowed to vote in Canadian federal elections.

FIRST NATIONS LEGAL RIGHTS First Nations and First Nations rights have been at the core of many reviews over the past 100 years. Major reports include: 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. One important way that Aboriginal people have sought specific recognition of their rights and title is through the courts. Here are some of the landmark decisions of the past 40 years:

- 1973. Calder case – Supreme Court of Canada holds that Aboriginal title exists in Canada, but is split on whether the Nisga’a Nation’s Aboriginal title had been extinguished.
- 1984. Guerin case – Supreme Court of Canada holds that the federal government has a fiduciary duty towards First Nations, specifically in relation to their reserve lands.
- 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.
- 1996. Van der Peet case – The Supreme Court of Canada sets out the test for proof of Aboriginal rights, which focuses on looking at practices, customs and traditions integral to maintaining First Nations cultures.
- 1997. Delgamuukw case – Supreme Court of Canada confirms that Aboriginal title in Gitksan and Wet’suwet’en territories has not been extinguished. The Delgamuukw case also recognizes 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 an Aboriginal right to self-government has not been extinguished, and is protected by s. 35 of the Constitution.
- 2004. Haida and Taku River Tlingit cases – Supreme Court of Canada confirms that government must meaningfully consult with and accommodate First Nations before proceeding with development or taking actions that could infringe their Aboriginal title or rights.
- 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.
- 2012. William case – BC Court of Appeal confirms that the Tsilhqot’in have Aboriginal rights to hunt and trap, to capture and use horses, and to trade in skins and pelts, and that the Province’s forestry regime interfered with their Aboriginal rights. The Court rejects the Tsilhqot’in Nation claim of title. At issue is whether title relates only to specific, intensively used sites or extends to broader territories. The Supreme Court of Canada will hear the appeal in 2013 or 2014.

TODAY, FIRST NATIONS RIGHTS AND RELATIONS IN BC AND CANADA ARE COMPLEX, DYNAMIC AND EVER-EVOLVING.

1969	Indian Affairs Minister, Jean Chrétien, introduces the White Paper designed to abolish the <i>Indian Act</i> 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 that Aboriginal title to Nisga’a territories was not extinguished.
1982	<i>Constitution Act</i> . Aboriginal rights are set out in Section 35.
1985	<i>Indian Act</i> amended to comply with gender equality provisions of <i>Charter of Rights and Freedoms</i> . The status of a First Nations woman and her children can no longer be lost as a result of marriage to a man without Indian status.
1990	Sparrow case. Affirms Aboriginal fishing rights.
1992	Creation of the BC Treaty Commission.
1996	Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples.
1997	Delgamuukw case. Defines Aboriginal title.
2000	Nisga’a Final Agreement becomes law.
2003	Powley case. Supreme Court of Canada sets a legal test for determining Aboriginal rights of Métis individuals and groups.
2004	Haida Nation and Taku River Tlingit cases delineate the Crown’s duty to consult and accommodate.
2005	Kelowna Accord established. Provides a framework for workings among First Nations, federal and provincial governments to improve the socio-economic conditions of Aboriginal people. Province of BC commits to a process of discussing and implementing a new relationship with First Nations.
2006	<i>New Relationship Trust Act</i> . 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.
2007	The Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement takes effect to provide financial compensation and other support to former students of Indian residential schools.
2008	The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada begins work to create a historical record of the Indian residential school system and its impacts. • Government of Canada offers an apology for its role in the Indian residential school system.
2009	The first treaty under the BC Treaty Commission process is signed between Isawwassen First Nation and the Governments of Canada and BC.
2012	Idle No More movement is launched, creating awareness of some of the key issues of concern to Aboriginal peoples.

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 help establish trust and better working relationships.

building a new world

A SHARED VISION — To create new relationships, we need a shared vision that celebrates our differences as well as our common ground. A collective vision statement can help people identify key issues and develop shared goals, action plans and processes, and commit to shared decision-making. People and organizations wishing to work with First Nations people need to understand the importance of First Nations history, values and traditions, and the importance of resolving issues. Information-sharing and mutual support can help us build communications that are trusting, respectful and open. Let's work together for a brilliant future.

The history of First Nations people and the historical interaction between cultures and communities offers us a context for current issues and conflicts in BC and Canada. Understanding the path we have taken, and deciding what new steps we can take together today, will help us move towards a stronger, more sustainable 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 2.9 million British Columbians.

The sustainability issues we face include climate change, threats to air and water quality, invasive species, diminished fish and wildlife habitat and declining agricultural lands. These issues have a direct impact on the health of the Fraser River Basin. These are problems we all now share. Learning from First Nations about their traditional teachings and approach to sustainability is one step towards a solution.

One step closer

Our vision is a Fraser River Basin where social well-being is supported by a vibrant economy and sustained by a healthy environment.



THE FRASER BASIN COUNCIL

Established in 1997, the Fraser Basin Council (FBC) is a non-profit organization that works to advance sustainability throughout the Fraser River Basin and across BC.

FBC serves as an educator, a facilitator and an advocate for sustainability. We are often invited to help others collaborate, resolve conflicts and canvass social, economic and environmental issues. As we set tables for dialogue, we remain impartial, independent and non-partisan. We recognize there is more than one path to sustainability and that people working together in good faith can find a way forward.



The Fraser Basin Council recognizes that First Nations in the Fraser River Basin assert Aboriginal rights and title. As reflected in our Charter for Sustainability, we believe that Aboriginal rights and title now being defined must be acknowledged and reconciled in a just and fair manner. These are not First Nations issues alone, but sustainability issues that affect all people and our future together.

→ **DID YOU KNOW?** ← THE FRASER BASIN COUNCIL BRINGS TOGETHER ON ITS BOARD OF DIRECTORS REPRESENTATIVES OF THE FOUR ORDERS OF CANADIAN GOVERNMENT — FEDERAL, PROVINCIAL, LOCAL AND FIRST NATIONS — TOGETHER WITH THOSE FROM THE PRIVATE SECTOR AND CIVIL SOCIETY. FBC IS COMMITTED TO COLLABORATIVE DECISION-MAKING AND ACTION FOR SUSTAINABILITY. FIRST NATIONS ENGAGEMENT IS IMPORTANT IN FBC PROGRAMS, AND WE BELIEVE IN BUILDING STRONG RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN ABORIGINAL AND NON-ABORIGINAL PEOPLE.



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 FBC'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: 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: 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: 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: 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:

FBC acknowledges the value and significance of traditional and local knowledge and respects the important linkage between traditional knowledge and Aboriginal rights. FBC promotes wider application of the interpretation of traditional and local knowledge, with the approval and involvement of the knowledge holders, and recognizes that such knowledge is integral to sustainable management. FBC also honours confidentiality and limited conditions of information release, and that information remains the property of knowledge holders.

COMMUNICATION AND COOPERATION:

FBC is committed to fostering frequent and open communication, information exchange and inclusive dialogue to develop shared solutions to sustainability challenges. 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:

Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada – www.aadnc-aandc.gc.ca
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.gov.bc.ca/arr
BC Treaty Commission – www.bctreaty.net
First Nations Summit – www.fns.bc.ca
First Peoples' Language Map of BC – maps.fphlcc.ca/
First Voices – www.firstvoices.com
Fraser Basin Council – www.fraserbasin.bc.ca
New Relationship Trust – www.newrelationshiptrust.ca
Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada – www.trc.ca
Union of BC Indian Chiefs – www.ubcic.bc.ca
Union of BC Municipalities – www.ubcm.ca

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and sustained by a healthy environment.”*

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