



TSLEIL-WAUTUTH NATION

PEOPLE OF THE INLET

BACKGROUND

The Tsleil-Waututh Nation (pronounced *Slay-wah-tuth*), meaning *People of the Inlet*, is a closely-knit, supportive and progressive community currently located on the north shore of Burrard Inlet near the neighbourhood of Deep Cove, British Columbia. We are Coast Salish people, with our own distinct customs, history and language—Downriver Halkomelem.

Our traditional territory—the land and waters we have lived on since time out of mind—is very large. For the purposes of treaty negotiation, we consider our territory to encompass approximately 190,000 hectares (720 square miles) stretching from Mt. Garibaldi in the north, Coquitlam Lake in the east, the Fraser River in the south and Howe Sound in the west. This area includes spectacular forest areas, glacier-capped mountain peaks, productive salmon streams, and now the dense urban settlement of Vancouver.

Generations of Tsleil-Waututh men, women and children have amassed an intimate knowledge of the territory's rich natural resources. In a yearly round of activity, a great variety of foods were harvested and preserved, villages and camps were maintained, and complex networks of trade conducted. The bounty of our territory and the resourcefulness of the Tsleil-Waututh people have created a culture that is vital, dynamic, prosperous and sustainable.

At one time, the Tsleil-Waututh Nation was great in numbers and presence, but the devastation of smallpox after European contact decimated our population from 10,000 to a mere handful.

Our Nation Today

Today, we are a small but growing community of almost 500, with about half the population living on Burrard Inlet Indian Reserve #3 (a government-allocated name) in North Vancouver, and the balance living off the reserve.

The Tsleil-Waututh Nation is governed by one Chief, four elected councilors, and a traditional family-based system of representation by all nine family groups (known as traditional council). We have grown from a staff of two to over 60 in a short period of time helping to better serve the needs of our community.

In an effort to create a greater quality of life for our people we have been active in economic development, most notably through our majority owned development company Takaya Developments.

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In the past decade we have developed a master-planned residential condominium and townhouse community called Raven Woods. Income generated has enabled us to create other opportunities such as the Takaya Golf Centre, Takaya Tours (an eco-tourism business), a public day care, a community centre, and a host of community programs and services.

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

For example, we have purchased nearly 800 acres of forested lands within our traditional territory and established Inlailawatash Forestry Limited Partnership to conduct sustainable forest management activities and to offer a broad range of professional stewardship services such as archaeological monitoring, mapping and ecosystem restoration.

We have established a joint management agreement with the Province of British Columbia over Say Nuth Khaw Yum/Indian Arm Provincial Park and led to one of the most innovative approaches to protected areas management in the Province. We have also implemented a number of water stewardship initiatives to assess pollution in the Burrard Inlet, and have conducted salmon enhancement programs to maintain and restore wild salmon streams and rivers.

Our Future

Our ancestors were proud to be Tsleil-Waututh and recognized that we are all connected as human beings. It is our ancestors who shared with us that all human beings, animals, and resources have their place. With this in mind, the Tsleil-Waututh Nation is continuing our role as a visible and active First Nation in an urbanized setting. We continue to look for new partnerships, new opportunities, and new ways to share who we are. There is a great opportunity for us to move forward while celebrating our rich culture and building a strong healthy economy, and a strong healthy nation.

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

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