

COLUMBIA RIVER TREATY

Information and Updates



The Syilx Okanagan Nation Chiefs Executive Council (CEC) is collectively committed to protecting, defending, and advancing the Nation's Title and Rights. As part of this work, the CEC is actively committed to protecting our collective interests by participating in the Columbia River Treaty (CRT) negotiations. These negotiations include all parts of the Columbia watershed, spanning an area of over 688,000 square kilometers. The Columbia watershed covers British Columbia on the Canadian side and extends into the US into Washington, Idaho, Montana, Oregon, Nevada, and California. The Syilx Okanagan, in addition to two (2) other Columbia Basin First Nations (SNTC and KNC) have worked to advance First Nations interests within the CRT – this approach is also known as the “Tri-Nation Approach”.

Key Points:

- The Tri-Nation Approach does not impact or undermine our collective Title and Rights. It does not take away our ability to negotiate as a Sovereign Nation and it is not a recognition of territorial claims.
- The Tri-Nation Approach has been used to strengthen the voice of the Syilx Okanagan Nation and resist government's divide and conquer tactics. By working alongside with other Columbia Basin First Nations, we have been well positioned to participate in the negotiations process and ensure that the Nation's Title and Rights in the Arrow Lakes are protected, and our Syilx voice is heard in the CRT process – for the first time in history.
- This unique approach has resulted in a significantly more powerful First Nations' voices being heard in the CRT discussions. This process has also been one of the earliest processes in Canada to include the use of legal concepts like Free, Prior, and Informed Consent (FPIC) as described in the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

The Tri-nation approach is based on expressed acknowledgement that the approach does not in any way extinguish, affect, or define Syilx Okanagan Nation Aboriginal Title or rights; does not constitute any acknowledgement or agreement that all three First Nations have Aboriginal Title or Rights in the Columbia River Basin; and does not create a land claims agreement or Treaty.



How is this Tri-Nation approach setting an international precedent?

The current CRT negotiation represents the first time any First Nation has ever been at the table during international treaty negotiations. Our presence at these negotiations is ground-breaking and has set a precedent for Indigenous communities around the world to ensure that Indigenous rights and participation in treaty negotiations are recognized.



This is being done by:

- i. Ensuring our continued participation and receiving vital information so that our leadership and communities can be kept informed of the CRT negotiations. By using the Tri-Nation Approach, we have been able to ensure that issues beyond flood control and hydro production are considered and addressed.
- ii. Syilx Okanagan representation through its leadership and team have played a central role in leading discussions on ecosystem function and cultural values - this ensures that Syilx values and knowledge are a key part informing strategies in the negotiations process.
- iii. The Syilx Okanagan Nation negotiation team continually ensures that the Nation's interests and rights consistently inform the negotiations. This continued participation is critically important in holding governments to a higher legal standard, often referred to as "consent-based" meaning that the governments have to seek "Free, Prior, and Informed Consent" from First Nations.

"When we take care of the land and water, the land and water takes care of us. This is our law."

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For any questions or concerns regarding the Syilx Okanagan Nation's involvement in the CRT negotiations, please contact:

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