



TSLEIL-WAUTUTH NATION

PEOPLE OF THE INLET

BACKGROUND

The Tsleil-Waututh Nation, meaning *People of the Inlet* and pronounced *Slay-wah-tuth*, is a closely-knit, supportive and progressive community currently located on the north shore of Burrard Inlet near the neighbourhood of Deep Cove. 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 – 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. 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 built up an intimate knowledge of this traditional 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, 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 our population from 10,000 to a mere handful in just a few years.

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), and the balance living off the reserve.

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

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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.

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 (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. We have purchased nearly 800 acres of forested lands within our traditional territory and are engaged in the practice of sustainable forest management.

For example, our joint management agreement with the Province of British Columbia over Say Nuth Khaw Yum/Indian River Provincial Park has led to one of the most innovative approaches to protected areas management in the province. We have also implemented a marine stewardship program to assess pollution in the Inlet, and have conducted salmon enhancement programs to return a balance to our waterways.

Our Future

It is our ancestors who shared with us that all human beings, animals, and resources have their place. Our ancestors were proud to be Tsleil-Wautt and recognized that we are all connected as human beings. 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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