



Artist: Darren Blaney

*Coast Salish Gathering
Treatise 2010*

Forward

*Kwacht chet ti xay stl'alkem smenmanit,
ti smamka xaxmin na7 tl'a selken ti smanit.
Tina7 tl'a smamka na xwii ti xay stl'alkem
stakw, ti kwekwetxwm texwta7 ti shkwen.
I7xw encha ti skwayel, stekwtakw, ti shkwen
wa aynexw chet ta nimelh stelmexw. Na7 tkwi
kwekwin, ti swa7am chet tina7 itti, men wa7en
chet chichayst ti chiyax, nexwnin iy snewayelh.*

*Estetxw ti snichim chet, eskekxw ti stelmexw,
nsiiyxnittemixw chet, tistakwtexwta7 tishkwen,
i7xw stam eshelhekwhins ti Xexenek Siyam.*

*Na melh snewayelh chet ti nchu7mt ta
nimelh stelmexw.*

*We have seen those peaks of mountains
kneeling quiet snow capped. From
the snow of the peaks goes the water
cascading to meet the white capped
sea. From sky, river, to the waters is
the home of the Coast Salish people.
This is the home of our Ancestors
that we have walked for millennium.*

*So it is our declaration that we, Gather
together to protect our land from water
to water, as was granted by the Creator.*

*These are our teachings for we are Coast
Salish people.*

*Forward in Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish) language translated by
Chief Ian Campbell, Xalek'/Sekyu Siyam.*



COAST SALISH GATHERING

The Coast Salish Gathering provides the opportunity for U.S. tribal leaders and First Nation Chiefs, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, and Environment Canada to build a collaborative body for

mutual understanding to solve the environmental issues facing our shared homelands. The Gathering facilitates a shared effort to identify priority environmental concerns, issues, and projects in the transboundary Coast Salish Region that is comprised of

the Puget Sound in the United States, the Georgia Basin in Canada, and the Straits of Juan de Fuca shared by both countries. The Gathering is a "Policy Dialogue" that brings major environmental issues to the attention of government officials in a common voice.



Coast Salish commit to exploring co-management of the Salish Sea

WE, THE COAST SALISH, the first people of the Salish Sea, have, since time immemorial, worked together in the spirit of our Ancestors; we manage our respective homeland territories, that span the white-capped mountains to the white-capped waves of the Salish Sea. It is through our familial ties and cultural ways that we managed and shared the bounty of our resources. We declare that through this treatise document we announce our intention to continue the work of our Ancestors in managing the lands and resources of our People, a land fed by the sacred waters of the mountains down to the Salish Sea.

The Coast Salish Gathering (Gathering) is an environmental policy forum for the Coast Salish People to continue to speak with One Voice for the preservation of our culture and the protection of the land, waters, and resources of our aboriginal territories.

This event hosts the Coast Salish British Columbia First Nations and Western Washington Tribes and provides a policy platform for dialogue that will focus on the need for strengthening environmental policies and practices in our homelands.

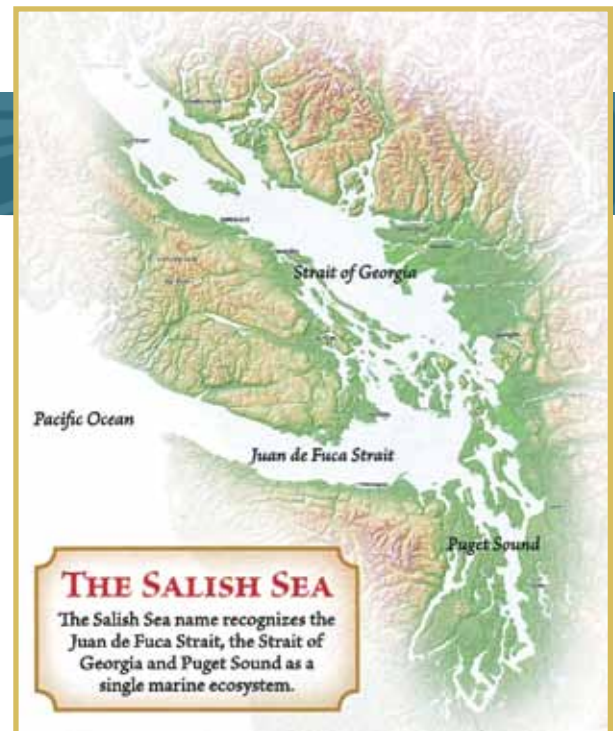
The Gathering extends its invitations to Environment Canada, the United States Environmental Protection Agency, Washington State, and Canadian and Provincial agencies to hear our deliberations and policy recommendations.

We value the input of all participants and believe, together, we can encourage a successful policy dialogue that will generate actions to advance the protection of our shared ecosystems.

The Gathering is not a government-to-government consultation process, but is a forum for coming together to find common ground on environmental and natural resources issues, concerns and projects both renewable and non-renewable.

The 2010 Gathering provided an environmental policy platform for Coast Salish Tribal governments to discuss impacts, policy, and science within shared homelands and waters of the Salish Sea ecosystem. For the Coast Salish, the Gathering provides a borderless dialogue. This focus on trans-boundary issues unifies all of our indigenous governments to seek common grounds to address detrimental impacts that adversely affect our indigenous connection to each other and the environment.

Coast Salish People have been practicing ecosystem management approaches for innumerable generations. It is through this wisdom and experience, passed down through time, that directs our voices to share with the World our 10,000 years of knowledge on the Health



of the Salish Sea Ecosystem.

We are the indigenous people of the Salish Sea and it is our sacred trust to protect our culture, treaties, aboriginal rights and title, and health of the ecosystem; this is the trust that has been given to us by our Ancestors. We have deliberated for five long years as the Coast Salish Gathering, with one heart and in one voice. It is with this one heart and one voice that we go to our teachings, or *snew ayelh*, the laws and protocols, or *chiyax* of our People, to restore the Salish Sea. In the past 150 years, since when the nation states of Canada and the U.S. made their claims to our territory, we have seen the thriving Salish Sea of our Ancestors impacted by pollution, development, and environmental mismanagement.

It is now time to come together to create a new vision of the Salish Sea





We have never forgotten the knowledge and practices of our Ancestors

based on the knowledge of the past, the lessons of the present, and a hope for the future.

We have never forgotten the knowledge and practices of our Ancestors of our responsibilities, *siiyamintslti skwxwú7mesh*, for this ground on which we stand or for this water on which we depend for our sustenance, our way of life.

As Coast Salish Peoples we maintain our connection to all creation, *xex 7é nek*, even though our Coast Salish Nation was severed by the 49th parallel. The long arms of our traditions and our lineage from our Nation never ceased to reach out to our families around the vast coastline of the Salish Sea and in the mountains that surround it.

In 2010, a collaboration of the ecoregion's governing bodies created history by officially unifying a water body under one name, the Salish Sea. The adoption of the name the Salish Sea honours a common pathway of reconciliation between governments and the Coast Salish Nations, and recognizes the relationship of the Coast Salish People to these waters.¹

For us, this alliance of the governing bodies agreeing to see the relationship of the waters as one provides hope that we can work together toward a healthy ecosystem for seven generations in the future. The acceptance of the one name and acknowledgement of unity, or *uwq*, is a positive step taken by the federal, state and provincial governments to restore and protect the Salish Sea for all people who call the Salish Sea their home.

It is through the collaborative policy actions of the Gathering that we, the Coast Salish Peoples, propose to unite the sovereign authorities of Aboriginal government, the U.S. and Canada to draw on the knowledge and science of all

peoples to develop a new vision of co-management for multi-jurisdictional ecosystem areas such as the Salish Sea. It is by working together as equal governing bodies that we can save and protect the Salish Sea.



WE, THE COAST SALISH, bring thousands of years of knowledge of management and conservation of the Salish Sea and her tributaries, a knowledge base that began before contact and continues into the present. As stated by Leah George-Wilson, past Chief of Tsleil-waututh Nation, "We carry 10,000 years of knowing the Salish Sea..."

No other government can share this vast history within this eco-region that stretches from the ocean, to the land, to the mountains, and sky. The Coast Salish retain a sacred trust to protect and sustain the environment and natural resources of our ancestral lands, watersheds, and estuarine waters. Our "knowing" is an element that guides us in our governance actions, it is our science, it guides us in our teachings, and it guides us in our way of life. We, who in our histories, songs and dance, recall the words of our Ancestors about the last climate change at the end of the Ice Age, the floods that followed, the first salmon swimming upriver to spawn, the forests and sacred waters of our People.

We, who can recall in our recent familial memory a healthy ecology in this territory, have knowledge that is needed to create change for the future; knowledge we all need if we, unified, are going to achieve the recovery of the Salish Sea through which we all live.

We know that spring freshets are coming as much as two or three months

earlier than the fish runs that depend upon them to reach upstream spawning beds. Our teachings, or *sneáyelh*, tell us that when the fish do not return to a river, as they no longer do in some of the Salish Sea's river systems, then the life in the river is threatened or extinguished.

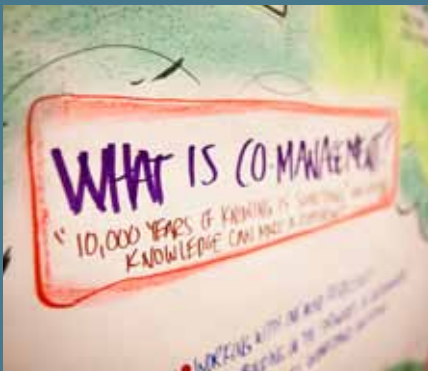
Conversely, if there is a large run of salmon, we know that doesn't necessarily mean there are more salmon. Instead, it could mean that two runs have combined in desperation, two runs together anticipating that the Coast Salish people will need food to survive a time of hardship. They come when there is enough water later to carry them home.

In the winter months we settle in our homes and tell our stories. What stories are we telling today, when the biggest topic of conversation in our villages is the changing climate? We observe and document it through our 10,000 years of indigenous knowing, and our research using the best modern science. It is this understanding and knowing that will create the change that is needed for future generations to thrive and prosper in harmony with the Salish Sea. So we, who govern by consensus and respect of each of the First Nations and Tribes of the Coast Salish as mutual partners in a shared territory, arrive at combining together as co-managers.

Co-management is a form of governance that we already use. So we, the Coast Salish People, are a people that govern by consensus and respect for each of the First Nations and Tribes that form the mutual partners of our shared territory. We have combined as one voice and one heart to work together as co-managers of this precious eco-system. It is a home that guides our way of life and provides each of us with the sustenance of our lives.

Co-management is a form of

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We carry 10,000 years of knowing the Salish Sea

governance that we already use. It is through co-management that we come together united as sovereign authorities at the Aboriginal government, federal, state, provincial, and local levels to create the will to change through knowledge and sharing. It is through this spirit of unity and sharing of knowledge that we can inspire all peoples of the Salish Sea to work toward the recovery of this great waterway.

We recognize that there are many initiatives underway to restore and preserve the Salish Sea. The Puget Sound Partnership coordinates federal, state, local, tribal and private resources, working cooperatively for the South Salish Sea, otherwise known as the Puget Sound.

Other known trans-boundary agreements for the Salish Sea have been signed by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Environment Canada, Province of British Columbia and Washington State. These Agreements are known for their generous outreach to Coast Salish; however, none of these agreements includes federally recognized tribes or nations, thus, Coast Salish are not recognized as official decision-makers on actions within the Salish Sea Biome.

We mention this fact with great care and caution, as many of the policies and actions out of these initiatives are in fact restoring and protecting the Salish Sea; however, we do share a cautionary observation: would the Salish Sea be in the state it were in if, in fact, these agreements were doing what they intended to do?

Our goal is to ensure the Salish Sea is healthy for all people who call this place home. Too often we have faced exclusion from the essential decision-making and even in the processes that lead to choices

being made in these restoration efforts.

It is now time to move forward and understand that this Salish Sea can only be saved if we all work together as equal partners, at one table, with one goal.

The history of our People is one of hard-won battles both on the land and water, and in the court. We have experienced a tide of change within our lifetimes. This tide of change has seen conflict and heartache as we have watched a precious eco-system transform around us. However, it is through the teachings and wisdom of our Ancestors that we persevered, for we are like the cedar tree, firmly planted, and our roots run deep throughout the Salish Sea territory.

We know that together we can overcome the barriers to co-management that have been experienced in the past. It is through collaborative decision-making processes of consultation, training and education in Native rights, government-to-government understanding, and political leaders taking the initiative to work together that these barriers will come down.

We see the way forward in rulings such as the Boldt Decision, the Calder and Delgamuukw decisions in the Supreme Court of Canada, and the Haida and Taku River Tlingit cases in the British Columbia Court of Appeal. The 1974 Boldt Decision laid out the framework of a working relationship between the Tribes and the State in regard to rivers and available salmon harvests. The co-management set forth in Boldt has become an international model for indigenous groups and state and federal agencies to work together.

The Coast Salish Tribes have over the years used the courts to expand co-management and provisions in their treaties to gain access across property

to shellfish beds, and to force the state to replace culverts that block salmon passage into the Salish Sea's vital tributaries.

The ideal of co-management—which was applied across Washington state government in the 1989 Centennial Accord—is a model for both government agencies and Tribes in working together toward a new vision of management of our precious resources. Some key requirements for First Nations and Tribes to begin co-managing are:

- Commitment of the Coast Salish People to the Salish Sea
- Capacity-building for Coast Salish to address inter-government relations, co-management practices
- Coast Salish Gathering initiative capacity-building to provide expert support in policy, legal, science and culture

A federal court ordering state or provincial governments to develop rules and regulations to co-manage the resources is an essential step for long-term implementation. Coast Salish have the sovereign authority to commence co-managing at any time, however we must understand the responsibility as governments, as well as citizens. Yes, we have successfully achieved our place in various decision-making and co-management tables through court orders, but we must also explore various successful models of shared decision-making and co-management, as experience has shown both can be established in different ways.

The inherent right of our People comes from the Creator, and court decisions have affirmed our inherent right to protect and preserve the lands and waters of our traditional territories. Through Land Use Agreements, Land Use Plans, and Traditional Use Studies,



Nations and Tribes are creating policies of stewardship and conservation to protect areas of cultural and spiritual significance for future generations. This includes areas for traditional harvesting and resource that allows for policy to guide and educate all levels of government in the past, present, and potential future importance of the land in relations to heritage, language, village sites, cultural and spiritual use and significance of the land and water. This is much different from the encumbrance or infringement of Parks or conservation areas on the land, for it is the Tribes and Nations that understand the heritage enmeshed within our mythology, our traditions, and who we are in relation to the land and water. Land Use Agreements allow us to have a meaningful voice in determining our future on the land and water.

The restoration and preservation of the Salish Sea, and the Coast Salish aboriginal and treaty-affirmed rights to the sea and its resources, are human rights in the United Nations context, and Aboriginal rights in the domestic contexts of the U.S. and Canada.

The U.N. Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, adopted by the vast majority of the U.N. General Assembly, affirms the right of indigenous peoples to self-identification. We the Coast Salish People, represented by the Coast Salish Gathering, have over the past five years identified an international community of First Nations and Tribes as the Coast Salish Nation. The Coast Salish Nation is a distinct people who throughout history have spoken one language with one voice and one heart, and we have lived since time immemorial on the shores of the Salish Sea, a place that has guided our knowledge and our lives since the time of our Ancestors.

The declaration also affirms the right of indigenous peoples to self-determination, which includes the right of rule-making, the right of negotiating intergovernmental agreements, and the right of governance. Co-management is a function of this governance.

(1) Declaration of the Salish Sea, July 17, 2010, Songhees First Nation, British Columbia.

Conclusion

The Coast Salish Gathering will convene a meeting in the spring of 2011 to hear and comment on a report from the Coast Salish Gathering Steering Committee on the exploration of co-management.

The purpose of these considerations is not that we would return the Salish Sea and its lands, from white caps to white caps, to their condition during the lives of our Ancestors. The conditions of our territory have dramatically changed in the last century—notably including the addition of more than five million people who live on the eastern shore of the Salish Sea.

What is immediately possible is to shift away from the course of degradation of the Salish Sea and move to build a pathway to dramatic improvement in the future.

While there are other efforts in the U.S. and Canada to restore parts of the Salish Sea, the Coast Salish call for a unification of efforts across the border, and an acknowledgement of the profound value that indigenous ways of knowing, combined with modern science, bring to restoration and protection. We will bring to co-management our thousands of years of knowledge and respect for all the mutual partners gathered round the sea as our guiding principle.

We, the Coast Salish Nation, have been entrusted to be responsible for the Salish Sea, and its lands and its tributaries, for thousands and thousands of years, from the very first time we opened our eyes and the Creator said, this is your language, this is your responsibility, the sacred trust you will keep. We have the rules for managing the Salish Sea and it is our goal to share this with all people of the Salish Sea so that we can work together for the betterment of our children's children.

We know how to read the seasons, and we know all our relations, who live like the limbs of cedar outstretched across the Salish Sea. We, the Coast Salish, speaking with one voice and one heart, have a fiduciary responsibility to restore and protect for future generations. Our urgency is born from our belief that we inherit our rights to the Salish Sea and its gifts from our Ancestors, and we borrow them from our grandchildren. We know that the real beneficiary of Coast Salish co-management is the Salish Sea ecosystem, and all generations yet to be born.

The purpose of this document is for it to become a living document of “who we are and where we come from” as Coast Salish people. It is to create awareness that we are not invisible on our own lands and waters, but are a thriving vibrant people that are connected to the land and waters through our spiritual, cultural, and traditional knowledge since time immemorial. By understanding where we have come from, we protect and hold sacred our lands and waters for generations to come.



2010 Coast Salish Gathering Treatise