



OKANAGAN NATION ALLIANCE

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Communique – July 2024:

Columbia River Treaty Agreement in Principle

The Syilx Okanagan Nation acknowledges the completion of an Agreement in Principle (AIP) between Canada and the United States to modernize the Columbia River Treaty (CRT), which is a milestone in the Canada-US CRT negotiations:

[Statement by the Prime Minister on an agreement-in-principle reached between Canada and the United States on the Columbia River Treaty](#)

[Canada, U.S. reach agreement-in-principle to modernize Columbia River Treaty](#)

Importantly, the AIP sets out an approach that will result in ecosystem and cultural values being considered in CRT dam operations and measures being taken to support salmon in the Columbia River system. A modernized CRT will not just focus on power production and flood control as is the case currently. These are critically important measures, but there is much more work to do to address CRT impacts on the Nation.

Canada entered into the CRT with the US in 1964 to coordinate flood control and optimize hydroelectric energy production on both sides of the Canada - US border. It was entered into without any consultation with, or consent from, the Syilx Okanagan Nation. It resulted in the construction of three major dams in the Upper Columbia Basin that flooded the Arrow Lakes and converted the Upper Columbia watershed into a massive reservoir system, resulting in the devastation of large swaths of Syilx Okanagan Nation Territory, the loss of Nation members' ability to exercise rights in areas of the Territory, and desecration of ancestral burial and cultural sites.

Canada and the US started renegotiating the CRT in the spring of 2018, as the guaranteed flood control provisions otherwise terminate in September this year. Through the hard work and dedication of Syilx Okanagan leadership, Canada granted observer status to the Syilx Okanagan Nation (along with the Ktunaxa and Secwepemc Nations) in 2019. This has allowed the CEC's negotiating team to participate in the negotiations with the US - an international precedent and a testament to the strength of a unified approach. Canada and BC also committed to seeking the free, prior and informed consent of the Nation to the terms of a modernized CRT.

The Nation's involvement as observers in the negotiations was important for the protection of the Nation's Aboriginal title and self-governance rights in the tmx^wulax^w. However, the completion of an AIP between Canada and the US is just one step. Although we are on a path of reconciliation with Canada and BC in relation to the CRT, whether true reconciliation will be achieved will depend on the success of ongoing domestic negotiations with Canada and BC on compensation for the impacts to the



Nation's lands, waters, ceremonies and people; long-term revenue sharing of CRT-related benefits; and a meaningful role in decision making on CRT-related matters. The CEC looks forward to making progress in these negotiations over the coming months.

We still have lots of work to do before the Nation can consider providing free, prior and informed consent to a full modernized CRT. In the meantime, much work also remains for Canada and the US to draft the text of the modernized CRT based on the terms set out in the AIP.

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