



**Okanagan Nation Alliance**  
101 – 3535 Old Okanagan Hwy  
Westbank, BC V4T 3L7  
Phone: 250-707-0095  
Fax: 250-707-0166



**Shuswap Nation Council**  
680 Athabasca St W  
Kamloops, BC V2H 1C4  
Phone: 778-471-8200  
Fax: 778-471-580



**Ktunaxa Nation Council**  
7825 Mission Road  
Cranbrook, BC V1C 7E5  
Phone: 250-489-2464  
Fax: 250-489-5760

## **CANADA EXCLUDES INDIGENOUS NATIONS FROM INTERNATIONAL COLUMBIA RIVER TREATY RE-NEGOTIATIONS**

(Unceded Coast Salish Territory/Vancouver, BC: May 23, 2018) – Late last week, the three Indigenous Nations - the rightful title and rights holders of the Upper Columbia Basin: the Ktunaxa Nation, Secwepemc Nation and Syilx Okanagan Nation - were told by the Government of Canada that they would be excluded from direct participation in the re-negotiation of the Columbia River Treaty (“CRT”). The CRT is the largest international water storage agreement between Canada and the United States. The three Indigenous Nations are united in their approach to the re-negotiation of the Treaty and are shocked that Global Affairs Canada would unilaterally forgo an important opportunity for Prime Minister Trudeau and his Liberal government to demonstrate his commitment to rights recognition and meaningful reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples of Canada.

The CRT holds back 15.5 million acres/feet of water every year for flood control and power generation with an estimated annual value of \$3 billion USD. The CRT has had massive impacts on the Territory of the three Nations including; the desecration of sacred, village and burial sites; the loss of fish populations and harvest areas, and; the turning of a vibrant river into industrial water storage reservoirs. All residents of the Columbia River Basin continue to live with the devastating impacts of the CRT and its destructive legacy. Indigenous Nations have been excluded since 1964 when the CRT was ratified and are now being told that they will continue to be marginalized and shut out of decisions directly affecting their title and rights. This decision is blatantly inconsistent with the Government’s commitments to advance reconciliation.

Since July 2017, the Government of Canada has continuously highlighted its commitment to “achieving reconciliation with Indigenous peoples through a renewed, nation-to-nation, government-to-government, and Inuit-Crown relationship based on recognition of rights, respect, co-operation, and partnership as the foundation of transformative change” as expressed in the Federal Government’s Ten Reconciliation Principles statement. This commitment was further solidified by the Prime Minister’s speech made in the House of Commons of February 14, 2018 in relation to the implementation of the *UN Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* (“UNDRIP”). Since 2011, the three Nations have been participating in good faith in the CRT renewal process and over the last few years we have had the full intention of holding the Trudeau government true to their commitment of reconciliation through respecting the self-determination and aspirations of the Ktunaxa, Secwepemc, and Syilx Okanagan Nations.

The Columbia River Treaty exclusion is amongst the latest of political disappointments experienced by Indigenous Peoples, including the continued Liberal support for the Kinder Morgan Pipeline. Ktunaxa, Secwepemc, and Syilx Okanagan leadership are expressing their collective outrage by providing the following comments:

Kathryn Teneese, Chairperson of the Ktunaxa Nation Council has stated, “Our Nation has suffered profound losses to our culture and way of life as a result of the Columbia River Treaty.” Teneese concluded her remarks by stating, “We have been working very closely with the *Syilx* Okanagan, Secwepemc, Canada and BC to chart a new future for the CRT that creates positive outcomes for Indigenous Nations, the region, BC and Canada. We have to find a comprehensive and effective means to fully participate in the negotiations process in order to achieve these positive outcomes.”

Kukpi7 Wayne Christian, Chair of the Shuswap Nation Tribal Council has stated that, “The Secwepemc Nation has worked collaboratively with Canada on Columbia River Treaty matters to date. This exclusion represents another of Prime Minister Trudeau’s lies to the world about reconciliation.” Kukpi7 Christian concluded by stating that, “The Secwepemc Nation must be involved in all decisions about Secwepemc Territory.”

Grand Chief Stewart Phillip, Chair of the *Syilx* Okanagan Nation has stated that, “This completely unexpected and shocking unilateral decision by Minister Freeland to exclude Indigenous Nations is an act of absolute treachery. Canada has begun to replicate the aggressively destructive behaviour of President Trump against Indigenous Nations.” Grand Chief Phillip concluded by stating that, “This is a fundamental betrayal of our three Nations’ Indigenous Rights; it undermines recognition and threatens the reconciliation path that Prime Minister Trudeau has so boldly championed. I’m genuinely afraid for Canada’s future economic stability if Canada lacks the courage to stand by its convictions and can so easily disregard its commitments to Indigenous Peoples.”

As next steps, the three Nations will be exploring all options available to them in response to Canada’s decision to exclude them from the re-negotiation of the Columbia River Treaty with the United States.

**For Media Inquiries:**

**Grand Chief Stewart Phillip**  
**Okanagan Nation Alliance**  
(250) 490-5314

**Kukpi7 Wayne Christian**  
**Shuswap Nation Tribal Council**  
(250) 503-7072

**Jesse Nicholas**  
**Ktunaxa Nation Council**  
(250) 342-6301