

Columbia River Treaty Committee

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT IN THE COLUMBIA

What is the Columbia River Treaty Committee?

The Columbia River Treaty Committee (CRTC), comprised of representatives from Regional Districts and First Nations, represents local community interests on issues and impacts to our region arising from the Columbia River Treaty. Our objective is to work cohesively to address the environmental, social, economic and cultural impacts affecting our region as a result of the Columbia River Treaty.

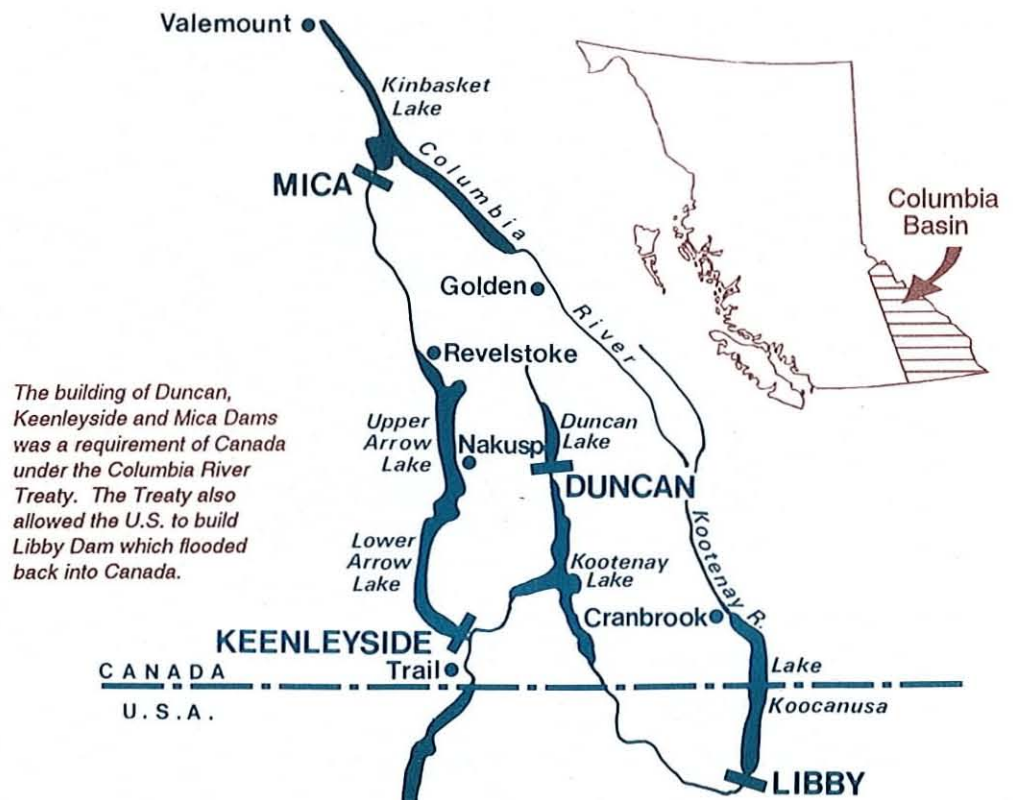
The CRTC -- representing 250,000 residents in the Columbia Basin -- is recognized by senior Government as addressing regional concerns.

Representation is through five participating regional districts:

- Regional District of Central Kootenay (RDCK)
- East Kootenay Regional District (EKRD)
- Kootenay Boundary Regional District (KBRD)
- Columbia Shuswap Regional District (CSRD)
- Regional District of Fraser-Fort George (RDFFG)

and First Nations:

through the Ktunaxa-Kinbasket Tribal Council.



Treaty Facts – Our View

The Treaty, which was signed in 1961, allows for the storage of 15.5 million acre feet of water in Canada for the purpose of flood control and electrical production. Under the terms of the Treaty, Canada receives 50% of the electricity generated as this water flows over United States dams, and 100% of the electricity generated in Canada. These are called "downstream benefits".

British Columbia sold the portion of the benefit produced in the United States for a period of 30 years for one cash sum. The funds were used to fulfill Canada's responsibility under the terms of the Treaty to assist with financing and constructing storage dams and reservoirs.

Although the Treaty did allow for some limited flood protection in Canada, the impacts in the Columbia Basin far outweigh the benefits the region received. The people of the Basin no longer live adjacent to pristine mountain lakes but along industrial reservoirs managed for maximizing electrical production for the Province as a whole. In fact, the Columbia Basin supplies 50% of the Province's entire electrical energy needs.

These projects affected the Columbia Kootenay Region severely, causing ongoing impacts to the environment, such as nutrient depletion of lakes, and habitat losses for fish and wildlife. The Kootenay Region is currently facing the possible extinction of white sturgeon; and Gerrard trout, the largest trout in the world.

In addition, the Basin has been adversely affected by the loss of vast amounts of land from the local forestry and agricultural land base due to flooding. In a region with steep mountains, bottom land is extremely valuable as it is the only area with potential development opportunities.

Ongoing fluctuations of the reservoirs -- as much as 60 feet on Arrow and Duncan lakes and 140 feet on Kinbasket and Kooconusa lakes -- make it difficult to develop lake-oriented tourism. In extreme drought years, some public boat launches have been 20 miles from water.



*Before Dam Construction --
Flooding in Trail, circa 1948*



After Dam Construction

THE WAY DEALS
WERE MADE IN
THE 1960'S

A 1964 cartoon of
W.A.C. Bennett (in
bonnet),
Prime Minister
Pearson (R) and
President Johnson:
"Here's the deal:
Mike gives up the
Yukon,
Lyndon gives me
Washington and
Oregon."



Some area residents understood the impacts our region would ultimately have to endure and fought relentlessly, but in the 1960's the only vision was growth and industry . . . not the consequences.

Chris Spicer, a local market gardener pictured here, did have that insight and was one of the project's major challengers. He still lives in his family home near Nakusp, saved

from expropriation by his family's perseverance.

The original promises made to the people reflected an optimism that our region would boom on the availability of cheap hydro electric power. This scenario never developed: Electricity, being so easy to move, was shipped from our region to feed the growing needs in the Lower Mainland of B.C.



Chris Spicer,
April 17, 1964

The Process

The CRTC is working with the Province to try to find solutions to some of the inequities that have occurred since the Treaty was ratified.

The CRTC is pushing for options such as having a percentage of the future downstream benefits assigned to this region to address the past and ongoing impacts.

One of the first steps in this process was to find out what direction the public thought should be taken. To obtain public input, the Province and the CRTC sponsored a Symposium in June 1993. About 150 people from the region attended, spending two days discussing impacts and future directions.



*"Ghost Stumps"
at low water on
Kinbasket Lake*

There were many innovative suggestions brought forward regarding working cooperatively with the Province to address some of the environmental impacts. Public optimism was high, with people looking forward to future regional economic development opportunities.

The Province and the CRTC formed a steering committee that is presently looking into how to best implement some of the recommendations brought forward by the public at the Symposium. Findings will be made public in 1994.

This process marks a new step forward in Provincial/Regional relations:

- working directly with the region in an open and public process;
- giving people a say in the building of our future; and
- organizing regionally and speaking with one unified voice.



Photo Credit: John Grogan, Valemount, B.C.

"Community Involvement in the Columbia" has been developed by the Columbia River Treaty Committee to advance public awareness regarding Columbia Basin issues.

For further information you may contact the administrator at your local regional district/tribal council office:

Regional District of
Central Kootenay
352-6665

East Kootenay
Regional District
489-2791

Kootenay Boundary
Regional District
362-9148

Columbia Shuswap
Regional District
832-8194

Regional District of
Fraser-Fort George
563-9225

Ktunaxa-Kinbasket
Tribal Council
489-2464

or you may correspond directly to:

Josh Smienk, Chairman
Columbia River Treaty
Committee
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Nelson, B.C.
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Further details are provided in the "Columbia Report" Series No. 1-5 published by the "Downstream Benefits Steering Committee. To obtain copies please contact:

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"The Downstream Benefits Steering Committee is comprised of representatives from the Ministry of Energy, Mines and Petroleum Resources, the Crown Corporation Secretariat and B.C. Hydro.

