



Cowichan Tribes

## Cowichan Nation Alliance

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Stz'uminus First Nation



Penelakut Tribe



Halalt First Nation

## Cowichan Nation Seeks Land & Fishery Recovery on Fraser River in British Columbia

– FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE –

April 29, 2019 (Victoria, BC)

The Cowichan Nation is taking legal action in the Supreme Court of British Columbia to recover its government-owned lands near the mouth of the Fraser River in British Columbia. The case is based on Cowichan Nation Aboriginal title to approximately 1900 acres of traditional village and surrounding lands on the south shore of Lulu Island now in the city of Richmond, as well as a Cowichan Nation Aboriginal right to fish the south arm of the Fraser River for food. The Cowichan Nation is today comprised of five bands – Cowichan Tribes, Stz'uminus First Nation, Penelakut Tribe, Halalt First Nation and Lyackson First Nation – with the first four bands being plaintiffs and the fifth supporting the litigation.

The Cowichan Nation's enormous permanent village was first observed by Hudson's Bay Company officials in 1824 as containing over 108 longhouses and first charted in 1827 as a landmark on the Fraser River's main channel (Figure 1). The village continued to be charted through the 1850s and onward during the process of surveying the international boundary between what is now Canada and the United States (e.g. Figure 2).

During reserve creation beginning in 1859, the Chief Commissioner of Lands for the Colony of British Columbia, Colonel Richard Moody, failed to finalize the village and surrounding land as a Cowichan Indian reserve, and instead surreptitiously took part of the lands for himself. Today, over 780 acres of the Cowichan Nation settlement are owned by the government of Canada, the Vancouver Fraser Port Authority and the City of Richmond (see Schedules A & B). The Cowichan Nation is seeking to recover those publicly held lands – much of which remains undeveloped.

The Cowichan Nation is not seeking to recover any privately held lands in the court case. For these lands it is seeking a negotiated reconciliation with British Columbia. "Our homeland was stolen from us. We want the lands that are held by government returned to us," says Chief William Seymour on behalf of the Cowichan Nation Alliance. "We aren't looking to invalidate the ownership of any privately held land. This case is about truth and reconciliation between the Cowichan Nation, Canada and British Columbia. Those governments need to reconcile with us."

The trial is set to commence on September 9, 2019 in Victoria and is expected to take approximately 300 trial days.

**About the Cowichan Nation Alliance:** The Cowichan Nation Alliance is comprised of Cowichan Tribes, Stz'uminus First Nation, Penelakut Tribe, and Halalt First Nation. The Alliance formed as part of the rebuilding of the Cowichan Nation, which Canada and the Province split into five separate *Indian Act* bands as part of the colonization of British Columbia without treaties.

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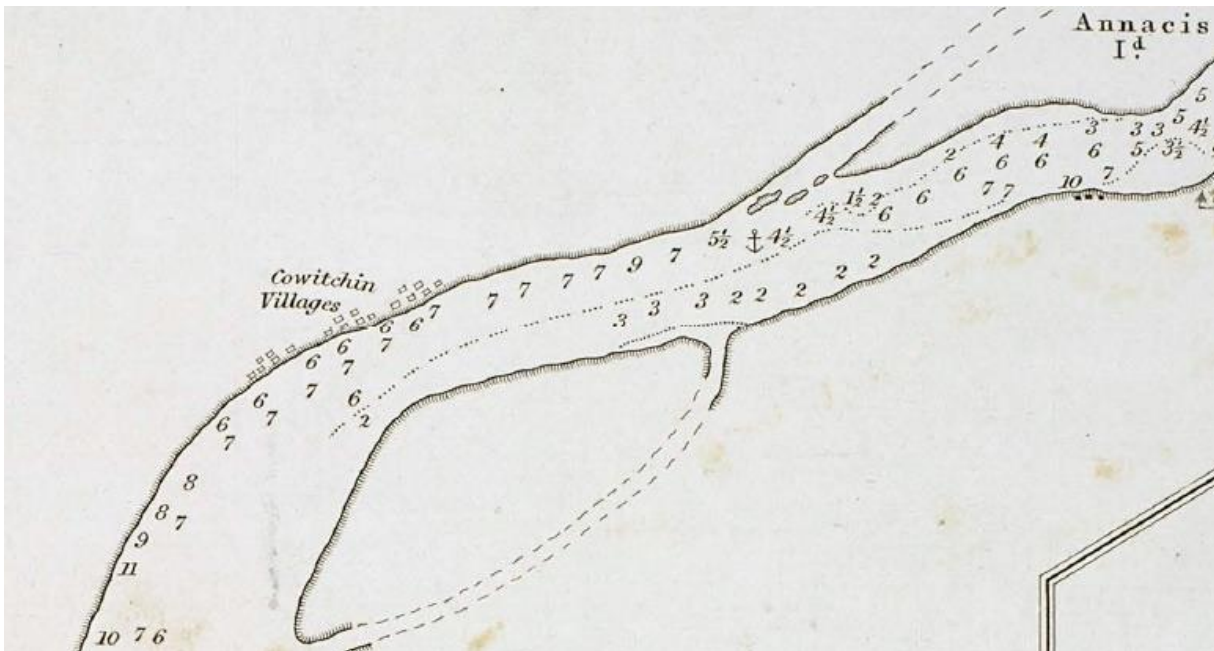


Figure 1: Detail from Great Britain, Chart #1922, 'North America West Coast Gulf of Georgia - Fraser River' from a Drawing by Cpt. Emilius Simpson in H.B.C. Schooner Cadboro, 1827.



Figure 2: Detail from United States Coast Survey Chart, 'Reconnaissance of Canal De Haro & Strait of Rosario and Approaches' Geographical Positions & Triangulation by G. Davidson Assist. Hydrography by the Party under the command of Lieut. J. Alden U.S.N. Assist., 1854.



# Map 4: Tl'uq̓tinus; Cowichan Village on Lulu Island

Researched and Compiled by: Dr. Ken Brealey  
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Schedule "A"

**Legend**

- Fishing Site
- Archaeological Stakes
- Houses
- Archaeological Site Boundary
- Cowichan Harvesting and Gathering Area
- Fine Prairie Grass
- Willows, Vines and Brambles
- Blueberry Patch
- Pinebrush, Blueberries, Grass and Moss
- Willows, Vines and Pinebrush
- Village Boundary
- Modern Road
- Trutch Survey Grid, 1859
- Bath Slough
- Trail

