



SLIAMMON TREATY SOCIETY

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January 4, 2012

Bulletin: Answers to Some Commonly Asked Questions.

In June of 2012 Tla'amin will vote on the Tla'amin Final Agreement. Our treaty team is reaching out to our membership to talk about the Final Agreement, and to answer any questions our people have. We'd like to share some commonly asked questions with you, to help our members better understand the Agreement and what this vote means for Tla'amin. We will be providing bulletins along with each Nehmotl in each month leading up to our ratification vote date.

Q: Will Sliammon be giving up aboriginal rights? What's the difference between Aboriginal Rights and Treaty Rights?

A: Aboriginal Rights are undefined. We know we have aboriginal rights to self government, and rights to hunt, fish, and gather. A treaty defines those rights and protects them under the Canadian Constitution. When the Final Agreement is approved we will have Constitutionally protected treaty rights to Self Government; and rights to hunt, gather and fish for food social and ceremonial purposes. The right to Self Government will apply on our Treaty Settlement Lands, and the hunting, fishing, and gathering rights will apply throughout our traditional territory. Those rights cannot be taken away. Treaty provides certainty while an aboriginal right does not.

Q: Are we ready for Self Government? Especially the responsibilities for financial management?

A: Under treaty, everything our government does must be consistent with the Tla'amin Constitution, and the laws that our Government will make. Our Constitution says we must manage our financial affairs according to Tla'amin Law. We must be open, transparent, accountable, effective and efficient. We must plan for the future, and create trusts that protect our money. There will be annual financial audits, regular budgets, and borrowing and loan guarantees. A treaty government will be more accountable to the Sliammon people and less reliant on INAC. Our Government will be better able to respond to the needs of our community. Citizens may challenge any decisions not consistent with the Constitution, including financial management.

Q: How will treaty benefit community members who do not live in Sliammon (Tuwusht)?

A: On-reserve, and off-reserve terminology was created by Indian Affairs for funding purposes. INAC does not fund off-reserve. Treaty gives Sliammon the ability to treat all of our citizens the same, regardless of where they live. Treaty rights, including the right to hunt, fish and gather on Tla'amin lands, will apply to all of our citizens, regardless of where they live. And as we earn revenues, we will have the option to create new benefits that apply to all of our members. An example of a new treaty benefit might be citizen-only payments for all of our citizens. This is very different from the Indian Act, which treats our members differently depending on where they live. An example of how the Indian Act treats our members differently is access to education funding and certain programs and services. Under treaty, all of our citizens will benefit.