

## **Colville Confederate Tribes & Okanagan Nation Meeting on May 12<sup>th</sup>, 2009**

Chief Fabian Alexis, Councillors Bill Cohen, Tim Isaac, Diane Louis represented the Okanagan Indian Band at the recent Colville Confederated Tribes and Okanagan Nation Meeting which was held on May 12, 2009 at the Omak Long House, Omak, WA. Preceding the meeting, the Chiefs and CCT Leaders participated in the Male Leadership Chief's Sweat on Monday evening at Omak Creek, below the Omak Long House.

The presence and unity of both Colville Confederated Tribes and Okanagan Nation were represented by the Okanagan Nation Chiefs' – Grand Chief Stewart Phillip, ONA Chairperson, Chief Tim Manuel – UNB, Chief Joe Dennis – LSIB, Chief Clarence Louie – OIB, and Chief Fabian Alexis – OKIB, along with leaders of the Colville Tribe and Council members, elders, and youth. Honorable Jeanne A. Jerred, Chair of the Colville Business Council, acted as the chairperson for the meeting.

Honorable John Stengar – Keller District; Honorable Virgil Seymour - Inchelium District; Brenda Thomas - Colville Enrollment Director; Ernie Clark – Colville Energy Director; Joe Peone – Colville Fish and Wildlife Director and Honorable Ernie Williams were significant leaders representing the Colville Confederated Tribes.

The Agenda commenced with opening remarks, followed by a prayer from CCT Elder Mary Marchand and songs performed by the Colville and Okanagan Nation members; the Osoyoos Indian Band presented a media clip of the "Chiefs Sweat" of December 19<sup>th</sup>, 2006 and gifted to each of the members that participated in this historical ceremony.

The importance of Nation Unity was front and centre of the discussion and the commitment to continue our connection and unity, also on the table was border crossing issues and the impact it has on our culture, food, dance, and relationship. It was urged to the leadership to strengthen our ties to ensure we do not continue to be divided by Government and International Borders.

Both Colville and Okanagan Tribes committed to regular meetings, with a tentative meeting to be coordinated for early fall, however, there was a call for urgency to come together sooner to send our clear message of dissent to the June 1, 2009 deadline for passports to be in place to cross borders, based on our privileges as Okanagan People and protected under the Jay Treaty we are able to pass and repass freely across the border including the rights to bring goods from the United States into Canada for personal and community use without having to pay customs duties on those goods, however this has not been honored by Canada or the United States.

The Chopaka (Nighthawk) Border was chosen as the location for the meeting with details to be provided shortly. Colville and Okanagan Tribes agreed to a coordinating working group to assemble support from both sides of the 49<sup>th</sup> parallel to demonstrate our dissent to this requirement and further to collaboratively work with other Nations across North America affected by this law.

It was further agreed to table the Environmental and Economical Agenda items to the next meeting; again; this will be coordinated through each respected Nation.

A gift giving of Pendleton Blankets were presented to the Okanagan Nation Leaders, with other gifts exchanged from the Okanagan Nation; Chief Fabian Alexis presented the "N'k'lmplqs" Flag and 7 copies of "We Are Okanagan" to the Colville Tribe.

Acknowledgement of our language and cultural continues to remain strong, although many years of Government influence have almost made this extinct. The youth have shown they are true leaders and applause to each of our youth that spoke in our language, and further appreciation to the students from the Lower Similkameen Indian Band who performed Okanagan songs and brought together the leaders in full circle to perform a Chief's dance.

Closing remarks were given by Grand Chief Stewart Phillip, with closing prayer followed by Elder Joey Pierre, Penticton Indian Band.

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