FACT-CHECKING THE "SINIXT CONFEDERACY"

The "Sinixt Confederacy" was created unilaterally by the Colville Business Council to assert exclusive rights and title in the Arrow Lakes area of Syilx Okanagan Nation territory in British Columbia, Canada.

The creation of this American-style confederacy, and Colville's subsequent decision to walk away from the Syilx Unity Declaration, has caused conflict in our previously unified Nation. For a full account, please read Chief Robert Louie's opinion editorial in the Vancouver Sun newspaper.

In recent media interviews and public statements, the Chairman of the Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation, Jarred-Michael Erickson, has made claims that need to be fact-checked:

THE CLAIM:	THE TRUTH:
"…the [Sinixt] Confederacy is not financially motivated…"[i] *"We've never been in it for money."[ii]*	"…All that money should be going to Sinixt." *[iii]* "Now we want to come back and re-declare as a people who have rights to the land." *[iv]* Jarred-Michael Erickson contradicts himself as he speaks on the topic of hydroelectric revenue in the Arrow Lakes, and territorial claims in Canada. His tribes are already compensated for impacts on the U.S. side of the border and control large swathes of land. It's also important to note the Chiefs of the Syilx Okanagan Nation have not tried to reach across the border into Colville's areas to demand and act to gain unilateral involvement and say over Syilx Territory in the United States.
THE CLAIM:	THE TRUTH:
"…We [Sinixt] are not now, nor have we ever been, part of a Syilx Okanagan Nation."[v]	The Sinixt have always been part of the Syilx Okanagan Nation, just like other nsyilxcən-speaking communities such as the Similkameen, Spaxomin and Inkameep. We have one language, one culture, one land, and one people. This claim ignores the many Canadian Sinixt descendants who are members of the Syilx Okanagan Nation, and ignores history, including Colville's own signing of the Syilx Unity Declaration in 2010.
THE CLAIM:	THE TRUTH:
*The Colville Confederated Tribes is **the** successor group to the Sinixt.[vi]*	This is false information: In Canada, the Syilx Okanagan Nation is the successor group for Sinixt descendants because many members of our communities are of Sinixt descent, the Sinixt have always been part of the Syilx Okanagan Nation, and we have continued to hunt, gather, travel and perform our ceremonies throughout Syilx Okanagan Territory including the Arrow Lakes region, to the present day. R. v. Desautel was not a title case, and what the Supreme Court found is that Mr. Desautel holds Aboriginal hunting rights as a member of the Lakes Tribe in the US - what Colville is now calling the "Sinixt Confederacy." Every level of court emphasized that although the Lakes Tribe is **one** successor group of Sinixt, that does not mean that it is **the only** successor group. As US tribes and US citizens, they do not have the same rights as Canadian First Nations in Canada. The Syilx Okanagan Nation and BC NDP leader, David Eby, recently released a joint policy statement recognizing and respecting "…the Syilx Okanagan Nation's representative role in relation to Sinixt people in Canada in Syilx Okanagan Nation Territory," and that, "First Nations located in BC must always be the priority and primary focus of all levels of government including the province of BC."

THE CLAIM:	THE TRUTH:
The Syilx Okanagan Nation is exploiting and participating in the erasure of Sinixt identity and history, and/or trying to claim Sinixt territory in the Arrow Lakes.	This claim is false and hurtful. While the story of the historical denial and alleged "extinction" of the Sinixt is tragic, it should not be used to deny the identity of Syilx Okanagan peoples in Canada who are of Sinixt descent – who we honour and celebrate - or to exclude the Syilx Okanagan Nation from our Territory. Syilx Okanagan people have fought for over a century against the denial of our rights by colonial governments and settlers, including in the Arrow Lakes area of our Territory. At the Desautel trial, we supported our U.S. relatives in good faith, by providing evidence of the continued use and occupation of the Arrow Lakes by Syilx people of Sinixt descent, including the many members of our communities in Canada.
THE CLAIM:	THE TRUTH:
The "Sinixt Confederacy" has maps and an ethnohistorical report by the BC government that prove its claims, while the Syilx Okanagan Nation does not.[vii]	The Syilx Okanagan Nation has not changed the boundaries of our territorial map, which includes our Arrow Lakes territory, since they were compiled in 1998, and submitted to BC Supreme Court in a protective Writ of Summons, on December 10, 2003, over 20 years ago. Our claims rely on our oral history and land-use practices over thousands of years, including our Elders who are respected language speakers, knowledge keepers and Sinixt descendants. European ethnographers did not speak our language, understand our culture, or ask the right questions. BC's ethnohistorical report on the Sinixt is based on these flawed accounts and was authored without consulting our Nation.
THE CLAIM:	THE TRUTH:
The Colville Confederated Tribes hope that all parties can work towards a peaceful solution in the future and, "live in unity and partnership."[viii]	While we would welcome this, the Colville Business Council continues to reject our offers to meet and mediate. They are unilaterally cancelling long-standing collaborative projects such as salmon restoration work. They continue to claim exclusive Rights and Title in the Arrow Lakes area of our Territory, to the exclusion of our Nation.

THE SINIXT PEOPLE HAVE ALWAYS BEEN PART OF THE SYILX OKANAGAN NATION.

One Language. One Land. One Culture. One People.

Stay Connected and Learn More

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Follow Us
Information is also shared through ONA social media platforms

PLEASE SEE RESOURCES AND REFERENCES ON THE FOLLOWING PAGE

END NOTES

[i] Erickson, Jarred-Michael (Chairman, Colville Confederated Tribes). "Who speaks for Sinixt? Okanagan, U.S.-based tribes spar over representation." By Jacqueline Gelineau. Kelowna Capital News. October 10, 2024. https://www.kelownacapnews.com/local-news/who-speaks-for-sinixt-okanagan-us-based-tribes-spar-over-representation-7580274

[ii] Erickson, Jarred-Michael. "Sinixt Expansion 'risks opening a Pandora's box of transborder claims,' says Syilx Okanagan chief." By Aaron Hemens. IndigiNews. October 8, 2024. https://indiginews.com/news/sinixt-expansion-risks-opening-a-pandoras-box-of-transborder-claims-says-okanagan-chief

[iii] Erickson, Jarred-Michael. "Indigenous groups in U.S. and Canada clash over cross-border land claims." By Nathan Vanderklippe. The Globe and Mail. October 7, 2024. https://www.theglobeandmail.com/world/article-indigenous-groups-in-us-and-canada-clash-over-cross-border-land-claims/

[iv] Erickson, Jarred-Michael (Chairman, Colville Confederated Tribes). "Who speaks for Sinixt? Okanagan, U.S.-based tribes spar over representation." By Jacqueline Gelineau. Kelowna Capital News. October 10, 2024. https://www.kelownacapnews.com/local-news/who-speaks-for-sinixt-okanagan-us-based-tribes-spar-over-representation-7580274

[v] Erickson, Jarred-Michael. "Sinixt Statement on ONA Public Relations Campaign." By Jarred-Michael Erickson. Sinixt Confederacy website. https://sinixt.com

[vi] Erickson, Jarred-Michael. "First Nations at odds over who gives input on Big White expansion." By Isacc Phan Nay. CBC British Columbia. October 14, 2024. https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/british-columbia/cross-border-consultation-1.7350908

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[viii] Erickson, Jarred-Michael. "Sinixt Expansion 'risks opening a Pandora's box of transborder claims,' says Syilx Okanagan chief." By Aaron Hemens. IndigiNews. October 8, 2024. https://indiginews.com/news/sinixt-expansion-risks-opening-a-pandoras-box-of-transborder-claims-says-okanagan-chief