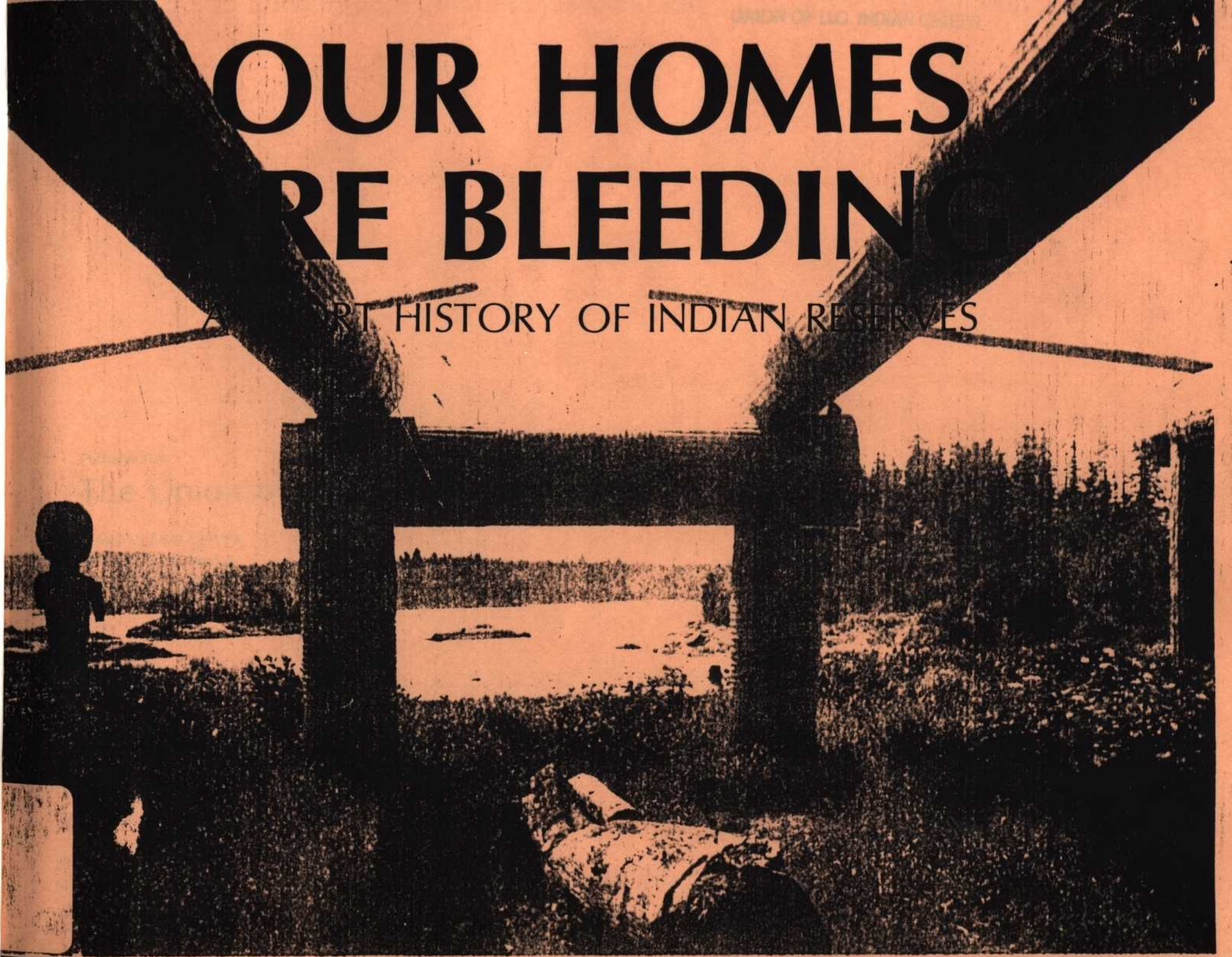


# OUR HOMES ARE BLEEDING

A SHORT HISTORY OF INDIAN RESERVES



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# The Union of B.C. Indian Chiefs

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# INTRODUCTION

Before the white man, there were no reserves, Indian people had full authority over all their tribal lands. Indian governments decided about hunting, fishing, grazing, water, land, and the use of all resources.

The Indian governments had sovereignty over their lands and all things harvested from them. There was no Federal law and no Provincial law. There was Indian law. Indian People had more than "ownership" of their lands, we had authority over them. Perhaps today we should also claim more than title or ownership within the white legal system. Perhaps today we should claim sovereignty and authority.

In 1850 a woman prophet travelled through the Okanagan, Similkameen, Nicola, and the Shuswap countries. She told of the SPIRIT LAND and of how the coming of the whites would result in the destruction of the Indians. She prophesied the stealing of Indian lands and the destruction of the fish and game by the whites and stated that they would destroy the Indian while pretending to benefit him. She called on Indians to join in a great war against the whites to drive them out. Even if the Indians were all killed in this war it would be better than living under the conditions they would have to endure, once the whites became dominant.

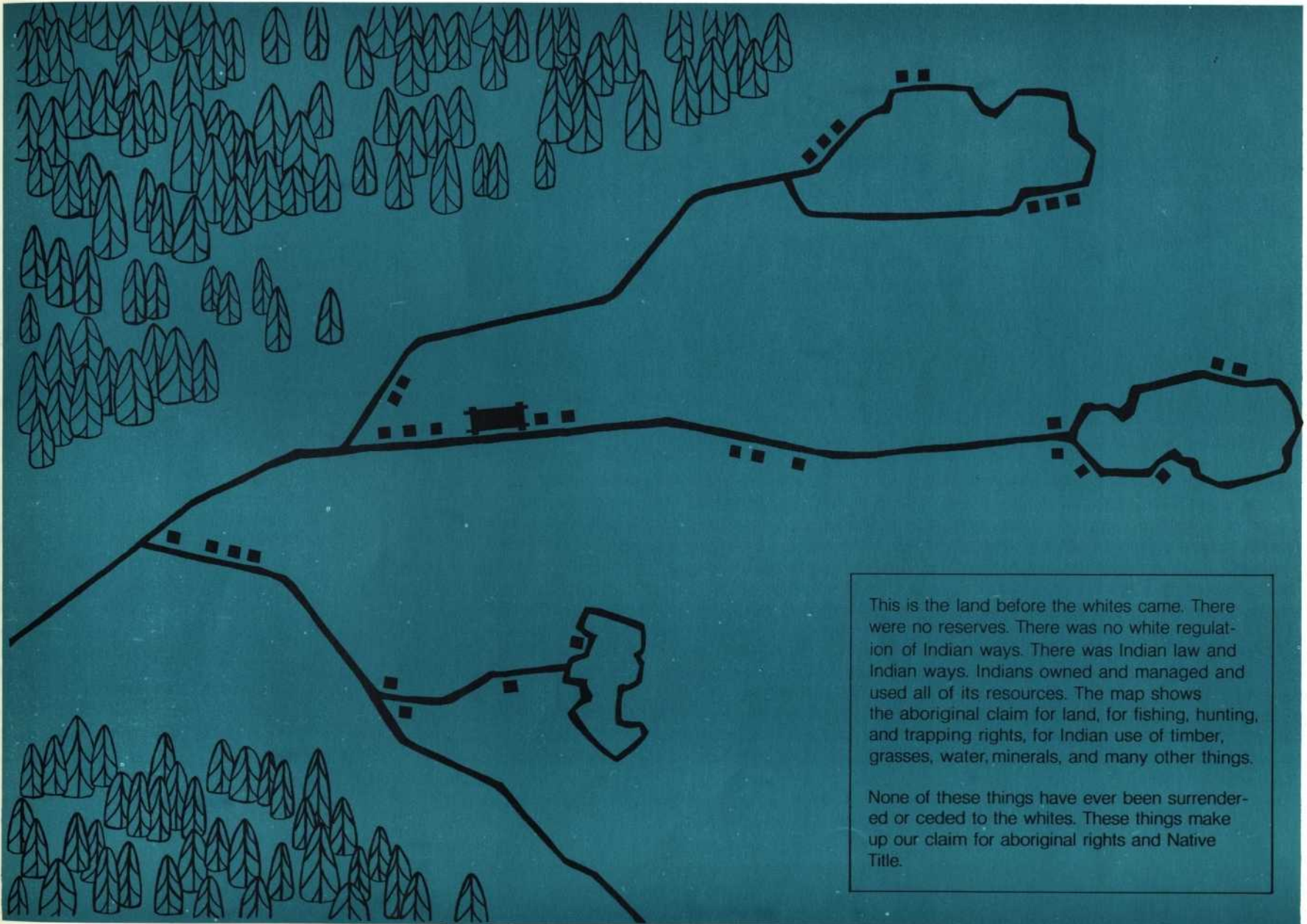
She also advised Indian people to retain their old customs and not to adopt the ways of the white man. To do this would be poison to your spirit. She sang many powerful songs at her dances and meetings. She called upon Indian People to rise up and follow her in a victorious war against the whites.

These words were heard by many people. The prophesies about what the whites would do have come true. They have stolen the lands. They have destroyed the fish and the game. They have ripped the Spirit from the land and poisoned our hearts. They have forced us onto small reserves and imposed their alien laws on us.

But the Spirit of resistance and protest has not died. This Spirit has fought the whiteman for over a hundred years and it still lives today. It lives in our Indian land claims movement.

This booklet will talk of how the whites imposed the reserve system upon us. It will talk of how they imposed their laws about lands and resources. It will talk of how they have tried to steal even the small bits of land we managed to save. But it is the Spirit of resistance and protest that should not be forgotten. It is the Spirit of our culture and our land that should remain strong.

# OUR LAND





# WHAT IS AN INDIAN RESERVE?

Indian Reserves are the remnants of "Our Land." They are the bits and pieces of our sovereignty, of our culture that have survived. They are monuments of our victory against extinction. They are symbols of the continuing struggle against our oppression by the whiteman.

Indian Reserves are also a system that has been imposed on us. The whiteman has taken control of our tribal lands and pushed us onto these small bits of land. The whiteman has claimed the right to legislate and regulate our water, minerals, forests, fish, game, and grazing. The whiteman controls these things and imprisons us on reserves. We are even hindered from developing our paltry reserves by an unjust bureaucracy that pays no heed to our law.

Indian Reserves are a system of control over Indian People. To challenge this system of control is to challenge the size of our reserves AND the authority and jurisdiction the whiteman claims over the resources of our traditional territories. We should not confine our protests to pieces of land unjustly taken from our reserves. We should protest cut-offs and land losses, but we should also protest our imprisonment on the reserves.

We should make claims for return of cut-offs and for extension of our reserve boundaries. We should also make claims for the extension of our control and authority over our traditional territories and their resources. Only in this way can we break up the "reserve system" as it is today. Only in this way can we regain control of our culture and our future.

Today an Indian Reserve is a jail. Tomorrow it should be the basis of independence.

*Sproat: Chief of the Seshahts . . . are you well; are your women in health; are your children hearty; do your people get plenty of fish and fruits?*

*Chief:*

*Yes . . . our families are well, our people have plenty of food; but how long this will last we know not. We see your ships, and hear things that make our hearts grow faint.*

*They say that more King-George-men (what the Indians called white Canadians) will soon be here, and will take our land, our firewood, our fishing grounds; and that we shall be placed on a little spot, and shall have to do everything according to the fancies of the King-George-men . . . "*

*Sproat:*

*. . . it is true that more King-George-men . . . are coming; they will soon be here; but your land will be bought at a fair price.*

*Chief:*

*We do not wish to sell our land nor our water; let your friends stay in their own country.*

*Sproat:*

*My great Chief, the high chief of the King-George-men, seeing that you do not work your land, orders that you sell it. It is of no use to you. The trees you do not need; you will fish and hunt as you do now, and collect firewood, planks for your houses, and cedar for your canoes. The white men will give you work, and buy your fish and oil.*

*Chiefs:*

*Ah, but we don't care to do as the white men wish.*

*Sproat:*

*Whether or not . . . the white men will come. All your people know that they are your superiors; they make the things which you value. You **can not** make muskets, blankets or bread'. The white men will teach your children to read printing - and to be like themselves.*

*Chief:*

*We do not want the white men. He steals what we have. We wish to live as we are.*

*Interview between Gilbert Sproat, Land speculator, and Chiefs of the Alberni area, August 1860.*

# THE FIRST INDIAN RESERVES



The first Indian Reserves in British Columbia were set up in the 1860's by James Douglas, the first Governor. Douglas' Indian land policy had two parts:

1. Recognition of Native title
2. The making of large reserves.

Douglas recognized Native Title by making treaties in the 1850's on Vancouver Island to purchase tribal lands. Douglas also made promises to other Indian peoples that their lands would be bought before whites settled and that they would receive royalties on natural resources taken by whites.

Douglas' policy on the size of Indian Reserves was to make large ones. This was clearly spelled out in 1861 when Douglas instructed the reserve surveyors to lay out reserves to the extent "as they may . . . be pointed out by the Natives themselves." This was done for the Fraser Valley, the Okanagan, the Fraser Canyon, the Lillooet, Ashcroft, and Kamloops areas.

Some of these reserves were quite large. For example, Matsqui was 9000 acres, Skwah was 3200 acres, and Sumas reserves were 7600 acres. In the interior, there were also large reserves. Nearly all the agricultural and grazing lands at the North AND South end of Okanagan Lake was Indian Reserve. Osoyoos included all lands on the East bank of the Okanagan River from Vaseux Creek to the U.S. border, a distance of 30 miles. The Shuswap reserve ran along the North bank of the South Thompson River from Kamloops to Chase.

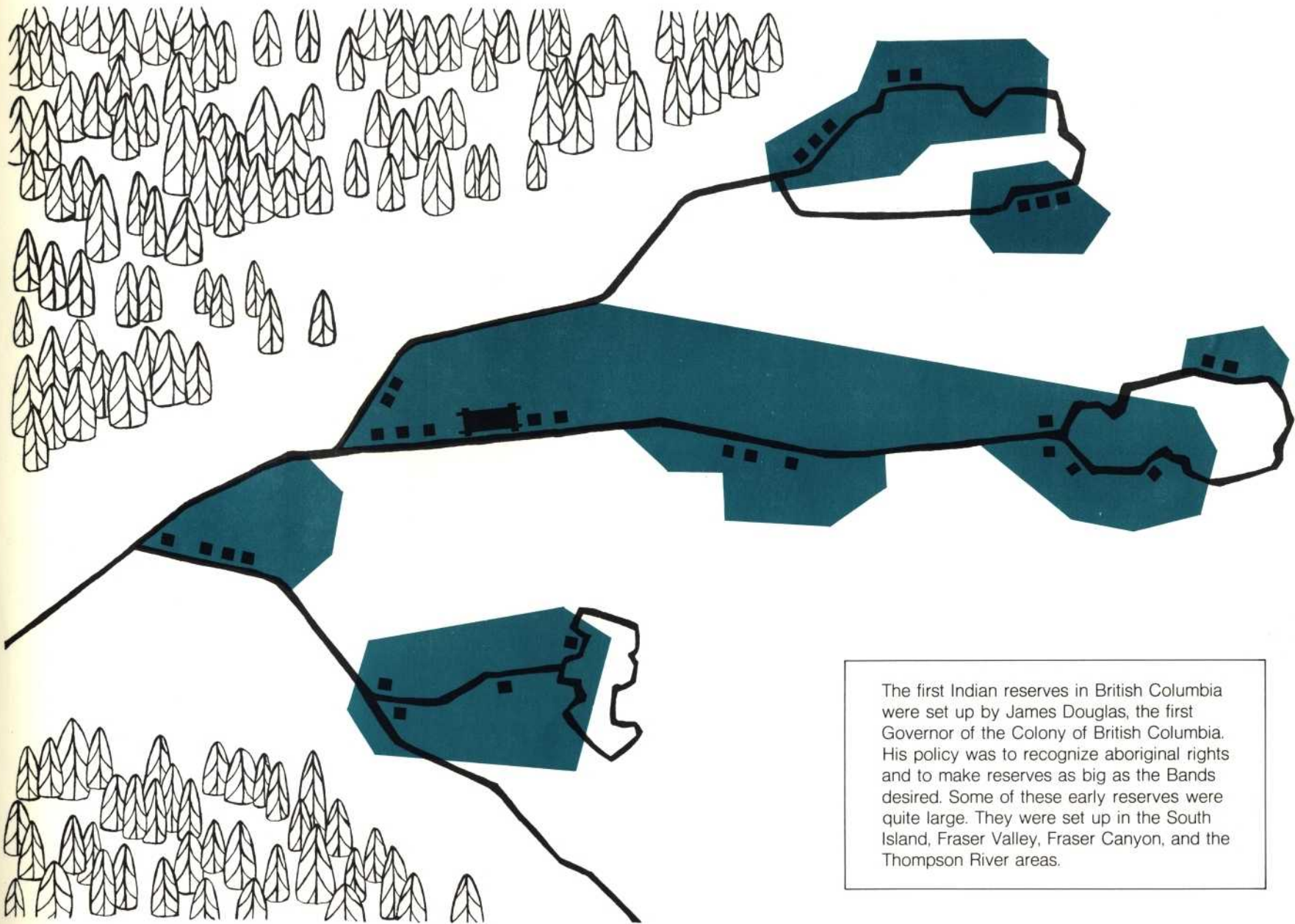
Besides being large, these first reserves were different from today's reserves in other ways. Indians had full hunting and fishing rights to lands surrounding their reserves. They also could take up lands outside their reserves and come to "own" them as white men would. Indians had fair access to other resources outside their reserves. They had grazing areas and plenty of water to develop their lands.

The reserves of Douglas were not restrictive. These first reserves were not yet prisons, for Indians had opportunities to lands and resources not within their reserve boundaries. Indeed Indians only agreed to accept reserves on Douglas' promises that Indians were not confined to the reserves, that Indians would play a large role in economic development outside reserves, that Native Title would be recognized by purchasing tribal lands, that royalties would be paid on resources taken from tribal lands by whites, and that Indians would have full control over their reserve lands.

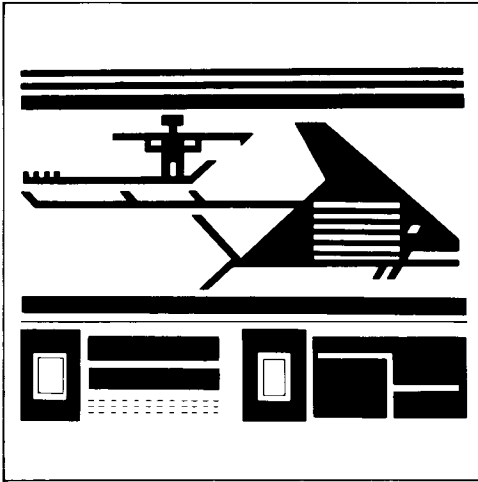
These were some of the conditions put upon the setting up of the first Indian Reserves by Indian People. If Indians were willing to accept some of the ways and authority of whites, they also made it clear that their rights and privileges, were to be respected. Indian People took reserves on this basis.



# DOUGLAS RESERVES 1860's



The first Indian reserves in British Columbia were set up by James Douglas, the first Governor of the Colony of British Columbia. His policy was to recognize aboriginal rights and to make reserves as big as the Bands desired. Some of these early reserves were quite large. They were set up in the South Island, Fraser Valley, Fraser Canyon, and the Thompson River areas.



# 1865: THE NEW INDIAN LAND POLICY

In 1865, Joseph Trutch became the British Columbia Commissioner of Lands and Works and got control of Indian policy. He broke the promises that Douglas had made to Indians. The government of British Columbia refused to recognize Native Title, reduced the size of Indian Reserves set up by Douglas, prohibited Indians from buying land outside their reserves, and discriminated against Indians in the development of resources on so-called "Crown land."

Under Trutch's direction, the government of British Columbia greatly changed Douglas' Indian policy. From 1865 the reserves were to be prisons and Indian attempts to develop were to be blocked. As one white leader said at the time,

*"shall we allow a few red vagrants to prevent forever industrious settlers from settling on occupied lands. Not at all . . . locate reservations for them on which to earn their own living and if they trespass . . . punish them severely . . ."*

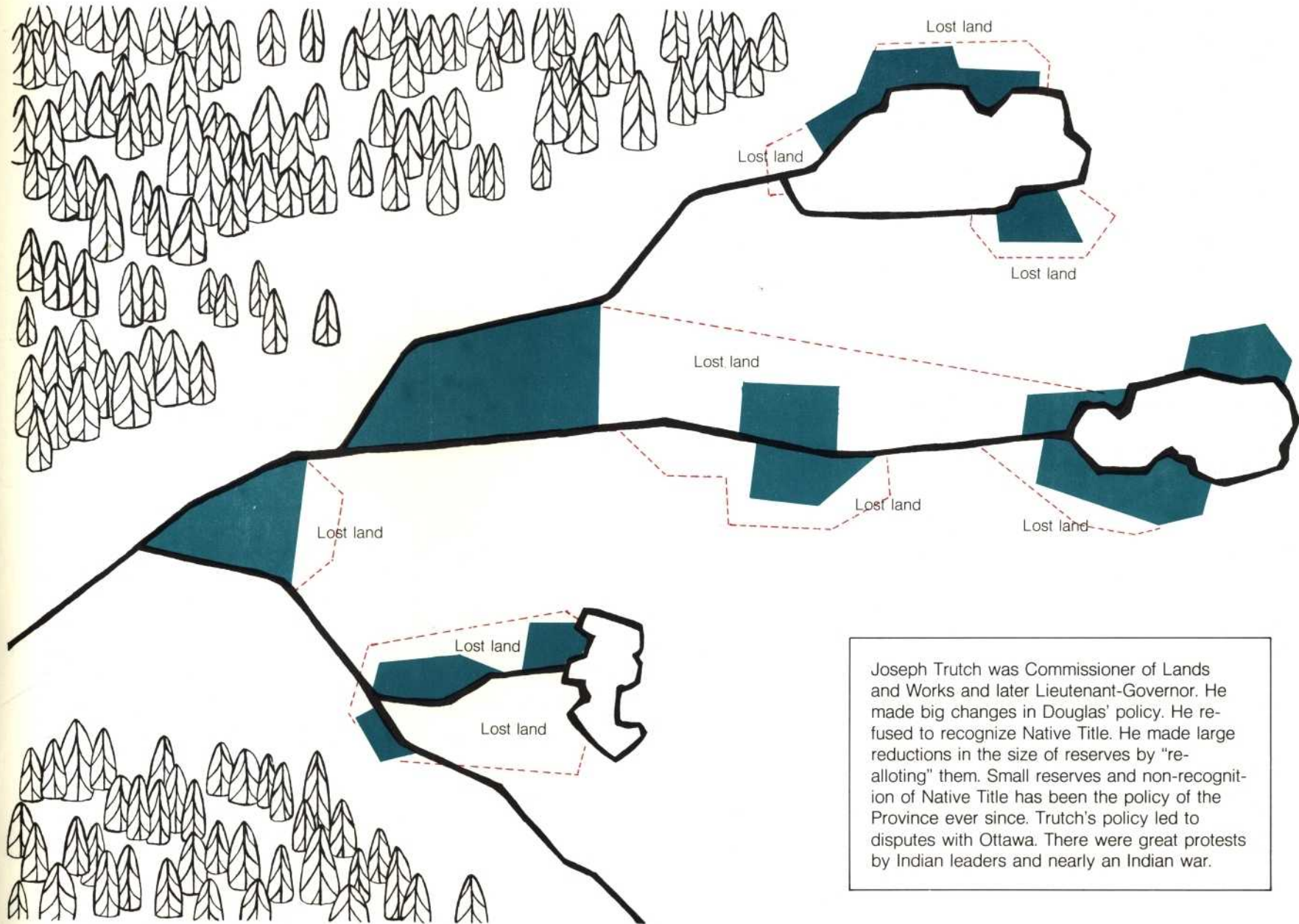
This is the attitude that has characterized the policy of white governments towards Indians. It has been a policy of non-recognition of Native Title, of cutting down the reserves of restricting Indians to reserves by not allowing them to buy lands, or discrimination in the regulation of water, minerals, grazing, and timber rights. These policies started in the 1860's soon after the whites set up in our land.

These policies are still in force and are still the position of white governments, both Federal and Provincial. If we want to change our situation, it is these policies that we must abolish.

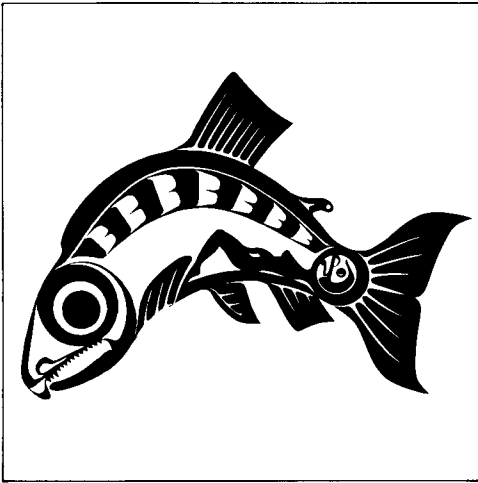
*Before the whiteman came, the Indians used to have all kinds of game to live on, but since the arrival of the whiteman pretty nearly all the game has disappeared around here, even the fish in the waters are going the same way, and I say I did not destroy all those things which God made for us Indians - it is the whiteman who came to this country that almost destroyed our game and fish.*

*CHIEF JOHNNIE,  
Musqueam Band - June, 1913*

# TRUTCH RESERVES 1860's - 1870's



Joseph Trutch was Commissioner of Lands and Works and later Lieutenant-Governor. He made big changes in Douglas' policy. He refused to recognize Native Title. He made large reductions in the size of reserves by "re-alloting" them. Small reserves and non-recognition of Native Title has been the policy of the Province ever since. Trutch's policy led to disputes with Ottawa. There were great protests by Indian leaders and nearly an Indian war.



# THE INDIAN RESERVE COMMISSION 1876 - 1910

The Indian response to Trutch's land policies was strong protest. From 1865 to 1880 the Chiefs of the Fraser Valley made a number of presentations, petitions, and demonstrations to the Provincial government and to the Indian Superintendent of British Columbia. The Shuswap and Okanagans formed a confederacy and nearly went to war in 1877 over the land issue. At Lytton there was discussion about forming a Thompson Union to push for more land. The Chilcotins declared that their entire territory be reserve and that no whites were to enter. Along the coast there were sporadic attacks on white settlers and traders.

These protests forced the governments to reply by forming the Indian Reserve Commission in 1875. This Commission reviewed the reserves left by Trutch and enlarged them in some cases. Over 35 years the Commission visited most areas of British Columbia and allotted reserves to Bands that had none before. The Indian Reserve Commission dealt only with the size and location of reserves. It was NOT given authority to deal with the Indian land claim for Native Title.

There were many problems over the reserve allotments of the Indian Reserve Commission. Often the Commission visited a Band when few people were present, so the reserves were not based on the claims of Band leaders and Chiefs. The Province claimed the right to "disallow" any reserve allotted by the Indian Reserve Commission, so Bands would lose lands that to them were reserve lands. The Commission usually would not recognize Indian interests in lands, if the Province claimed that the lands had already been sold. Sometimes the Commission would allot reserves on the recommendation of the Indian Agent and without consultations with Indians. There are many other land loss injustices caused by the Indian Reserve Commission that Indians protested.

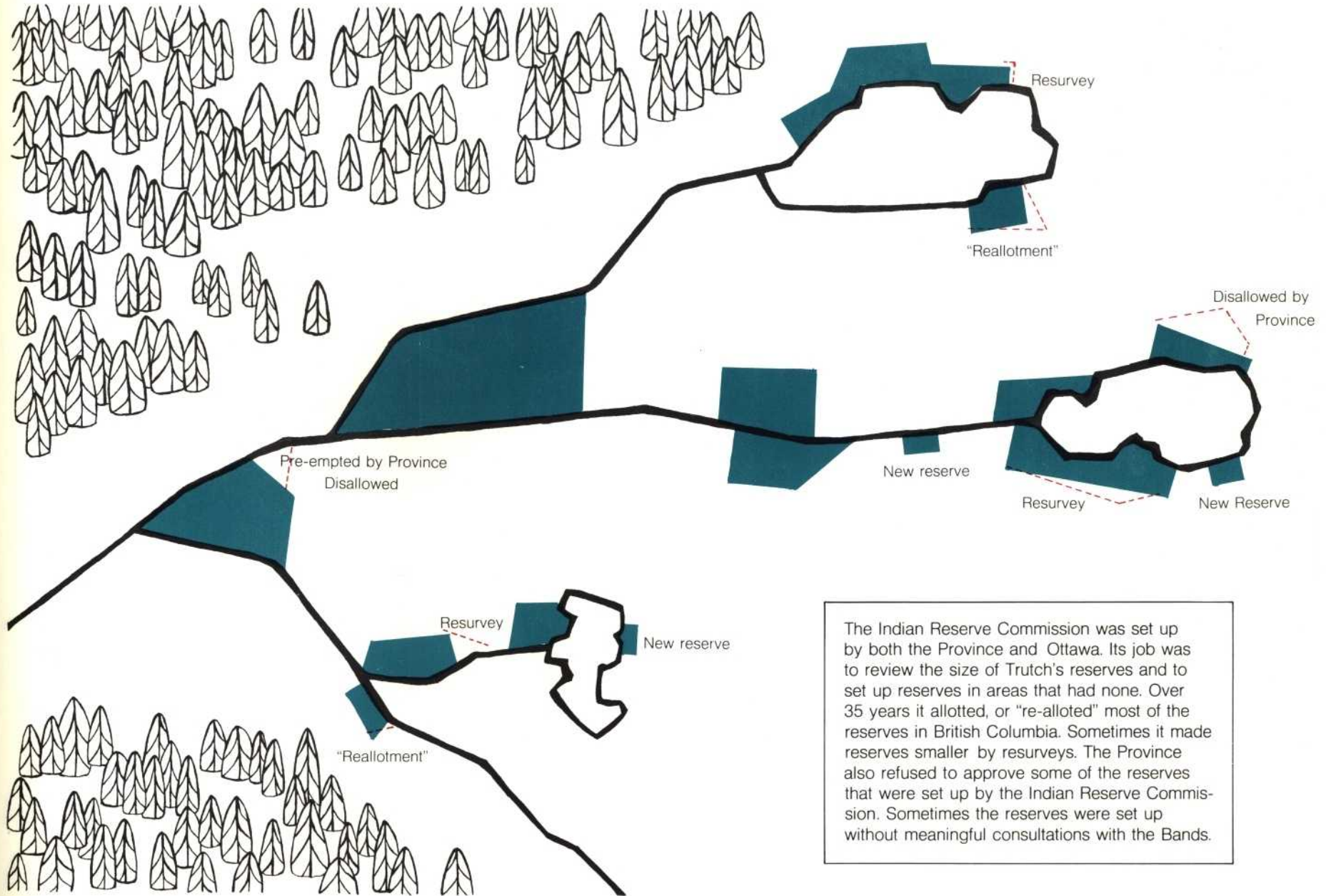
*I want to have more room on my Reserves. I have lots of people here, and lots of ground on the hills, but it is all rocks . . .*

*You see how poor the Indians are, and the Indians all over B.C. are now poor. When we went down below we gave McBride and Borden all the information down there; all the troubles that the Indians have had . . .*

*All those creeks through the Indian Reserves for irrigation, the Government sells all the rights to the whites, and the Indians have no water, and the Victoria Government does not sell the second right. We have the first right to all the creeks, but most of the years the whites take all the water, and the Indian Agent is not here all the time to look after that.*

*CHIEF BAPTISTE WILLIAMS,  
Williams Lake Band - July, 1914*

# INDIAN RESERVE COMMISSION 1876 - 1910



The Indian Reserve Commission was set up by both the Province and Ottawa. Its job was to review the size of Trutch's reserves and to set up reserves in areas that had none. Over 35 years it allotted, or "re-allotted" most of the reserves in British Columbia. Sometimes it made reserves smaller by resurveys. The Province also refused to approve some of the reserves that were set up by the Indian Reserve Commission. Sometimes the reserves were set up without meaningful consultations with the Bands.

The key issues were the small size of the reserves AND the non-recognition of Native Title. These issues gave rise to a strong land claims protest movement in the years after 1900. The Nishga Land Committee and other groups sent delegations and petitions to Victoria, Ottawa, and London.

This protest activity and the Province's attempts to get Indian land, and the dispute between the Federal and Provincial government over the control and management of Indian Reserves ended the work of the Indian Reserve Commission in 1910.

Another crucial development in the years between 1875 and 1910 was that gradually the Province of British Columbia imposed its laws and regulations of timber, minerals, grazing, water, hunting, and trapping on Indian tribal lands. The Provincial regulations clearly discriminated against Indians and blocked many Indians' attempts to develop their lands and resources. It is in these years that Indian Reserves become jails and that Indian People are put under white laws.

The Department of Indian Affairs set up its administration in British Columbia in the 1870's. By 1885 there were Indian Agents for most tribes. The Department of Indian affairs clearly did not work to assist Indian attempts to develop economically. The Department also failed to stop discrimination by the Province in the regulation of resources. For example, around 1900 there were Indian logging operations along the coast that were quite successful. Then in 1907 a Provincial forestry act effectively discriminated against these Indian logging ventures and ended them.

The Department of Indian Affairs response was not to intervene against the Province. The Department also enforced a policy that Indians could not even log their reserves in order to save their operations. This brought economic and social collapse to many Indian families.

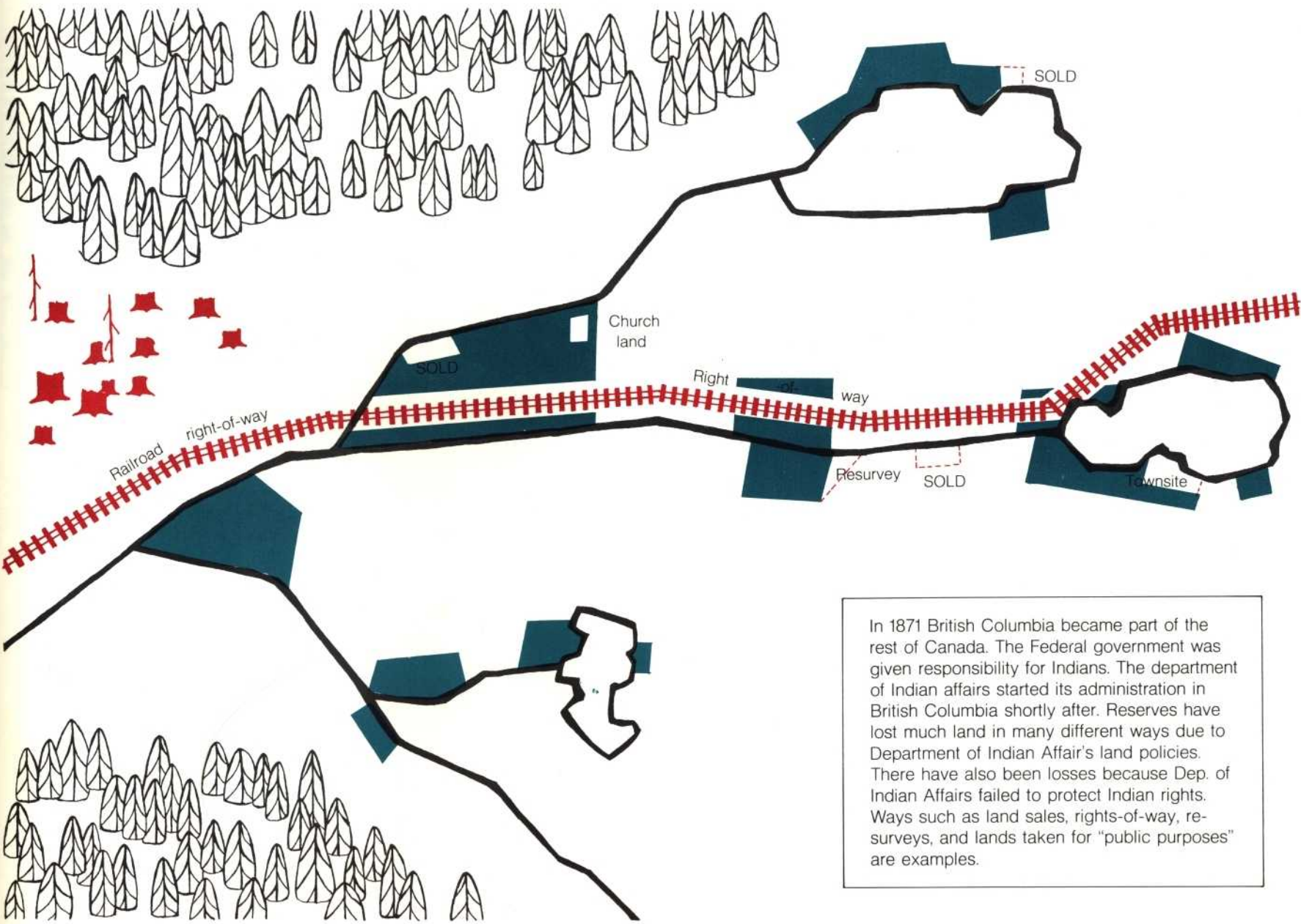
Similar situations took place over water, fishing, grazing, and mineral rights. The Department of Indian affairs has always "looked the other way" when the Province was grabbing our lands, our wealth, our resources.

Is this the meaning of the "trust responsibility?"

*We are protesting the fact that we are losing our lands . . . not only our lands, but all other things that would be good for our benefit such as fishing and trapping and all the places where we get our food which we have, in former days, been able to get, and all the fur animals. If we want to get any now we are threatened. We have no exclusive rights and privileges in our rivers . . . we are losing the privileges among ourselves to have all the fish that are in the rivers and seas that belong to our country.*

*CHIEF OWAHAGALEESE,  
Nimpkish Band, Alert Bay - June, 1914*

# D.I.A. LAND ADMINISTRATION POLICY 1870's - 1920's



In 1871 British Columbia became part of the rest of Canada. The Federal government was given responsibility for Indians. The department of Indian affairs started its administration in British Columbia shortly after. Reserves have lost much land in many different ways due to Department of Indian Affairs' land policies. There have also been losses because Dep. of Indian Affairs failed to protect Indian rights. Ways such as land sales, rights-of-way, re-surveys, and lands taken for "public purposes" are examples.



# THE McKENNA- McBRIDE COMMISSION 1913 - 1916

In 1912 the Federal and Provincial government set up the McKenna - McBride Commission. Its job was to review size and location of Indian Reserves in British Columbia. The Commission worked from 1913 to 1916 and visited nearly all Indian Bands. The Commission had power to make cut-offs ONLY if the Band consented. This was part of the Commission's terms of reference and was long established Indian land policy.

Despite this the McKenna-McBride Commission ordered cut-offs from the 23 Bands which total about 36,000 acres. In no case did the band agree to the cut-off. Most Bands made claims for more land and flatly opposed any cut-offs. For example, a spokesman of the Okanagan Band said: *"this land is mine, therefore I will not sell it, and I don't want to have my land cut off . . ."* Still Okanagan Band had three cut-offs totalling 246 acres.

Likewise Chief Paul Kladak opposed cut-offs and testified about the Gitzault Reserve:

*"I am putting before you . . . the grievances of my land . . . of my village. It is a great grievance and trouble to us . . . there are too many white people trying to take the land from me. They have practically run all over the Indian Reserve notwithstanding the word of the government that no white man shall come. From now on I want this to cease . . . I want the reserve to cover the whole waterfront."*

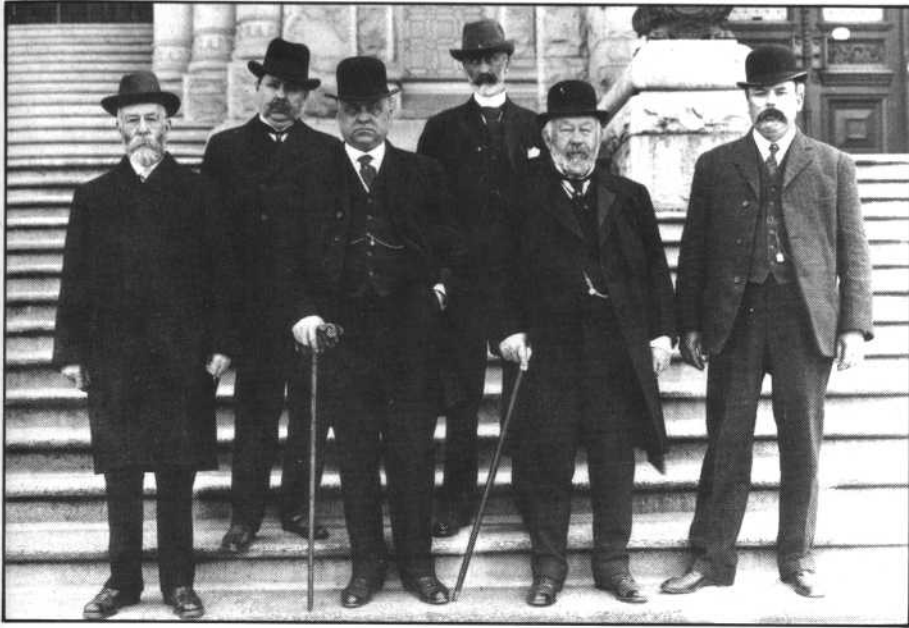
However, the 202 acre reserve was cut-off because the McKenna - McBride commission said that it was: *"conveniently situated near mining properties promising early development."*

The story of the McKenna - McBride Commission's theft of Indian land is similar in the other Band's cases. The unjust act of the cut-offs was "legalized" after the fact by laws passed in 1919 and 1920 by both the Federal and Provincial governments.

*The Kitsumkalums are just like any other tribes - they have been bleeding day and night just on account of the way we have been treated and handled - why can't we handle our land ourselves while men on the other side of the world they are handling our land for us. Another thing the Government employ people to go about the reserves and pay them high salaries - constables and Indian Agents - all the money that they are paid with comes out of our land money and they get fat on it, but we who own the land get slim, and so slim sometimes that we cannot work while these people they get "swelled up."*

CHARLES NELSON,  
Kitsumkalum Band - September, 1915



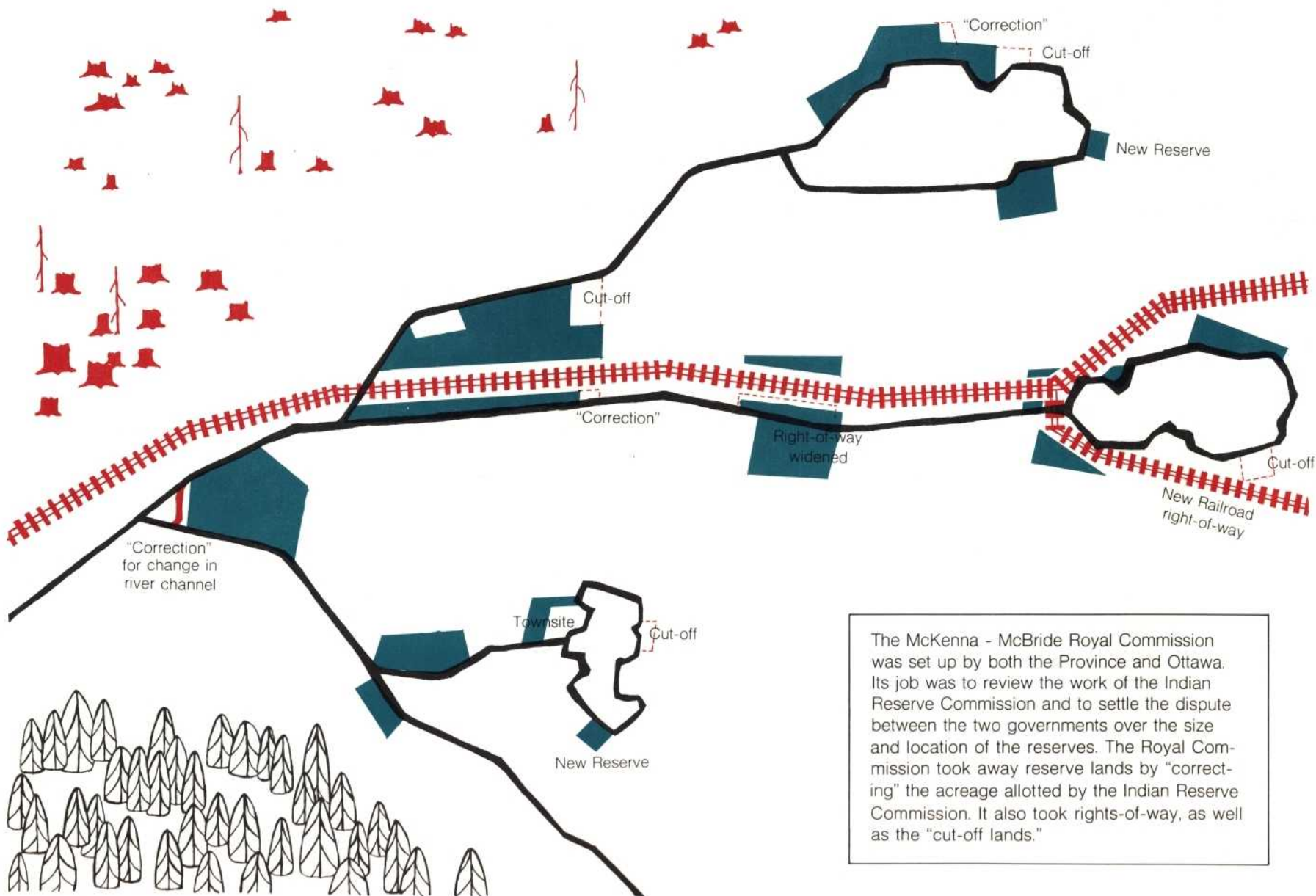


*These members of the McKenna-McBride Commission, appointed in 1912, travelled throughout British Columbia from 1913 to 1916 making decisions about the size and locations of Federal Reserves. These are the men who made the "Cut-offs."*

✓ *FRANCOISE TIMOYAKIN, Penticton Band, spoke to the McKenna-McBride Commission about the Land claim. He opposed cut-offs saying: " I am going to tell how the Indians used to live a long time ago, . . . It is not because the whiteman has come that we make our living - we have been living before the whiteman came and now you asked us how we got along. We got along from the land - it is our father and mother - we get our living just like milk from the land, therefore we have no land to sell - it would be just like selling our bodies . . ."*



# McKENNA-McBRIDE COMMISSION 1913 - 1924



The McKenna - McBride Royal Commission was set up by both the Province and Ottawa. Its job was to review the work of the Indian Reserve Commission and to settle the dispute between the two governments over the size and location of the reserves. The Royal Commission took away reserve lands by "correcting" the acreage allotted by the Indian Reserve Commission. It also took rights-of-way, as well as the "cut-off lands."

*We are really sorry and it hurts our feelings about our land and about our title to our land. Not only our title but our fishing, hunting and everything that we used to live on in the old days - the Government has taken it all and left us nothing. All my people are poor and living thin. Everything that we should live on now the Government has taken hold of it even the timber!*

CHIEF JAMES STAGER  
Mt. Currie - August, 1915

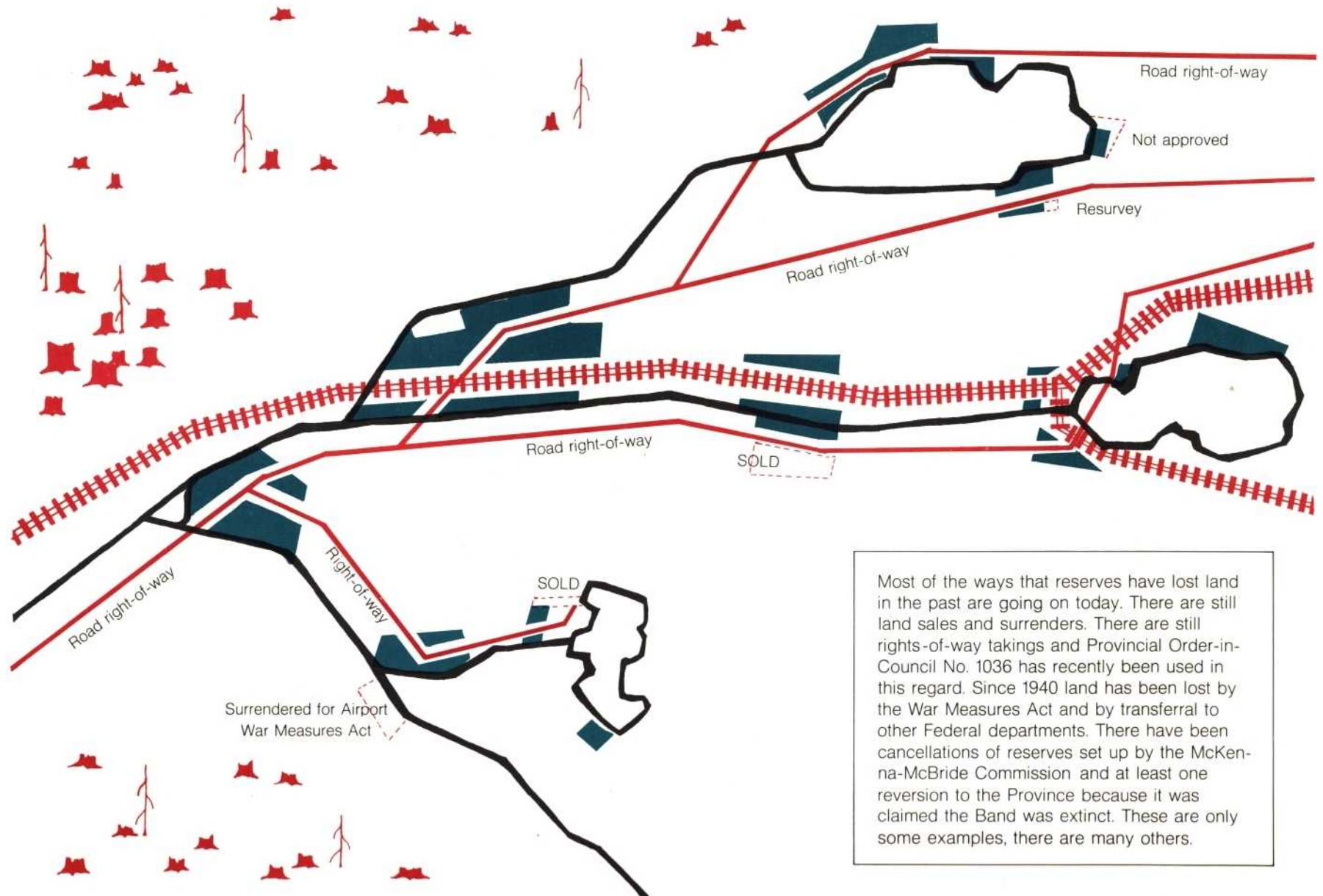
A number of bands refused to deal with the McKenna - McBride Commission because it had no authority to deal with the question of Native Title. The McKenna - McBride Commission's refusal to deal with Native Title was due to the policy of the Province of British Columbia. Since 1865 it has continuously been the Province that has blocked a settlement of Indian ownership to tribal lands.

The position taken by the Bands was that if the issue of Native Title should first be dealt with, then questions of the size and location of Indian Reserves could be settled. For example, Chief Joseph of Port Simpson Band said:

*"We are sorry that we expected to go more fully into the land question with the Commission thinking that that they had power to deal with the larger land question, but seeing that they are not empowered to do so, it would be useless . . . to say more."*

As with other Bands Port Simpson gave NO consent to cut-offs, yet the McKenna - McBride Commission made four cut-offs totalling over 11,000 acres.

# D.I.A. ADMINISTRATION SINCE 1920's

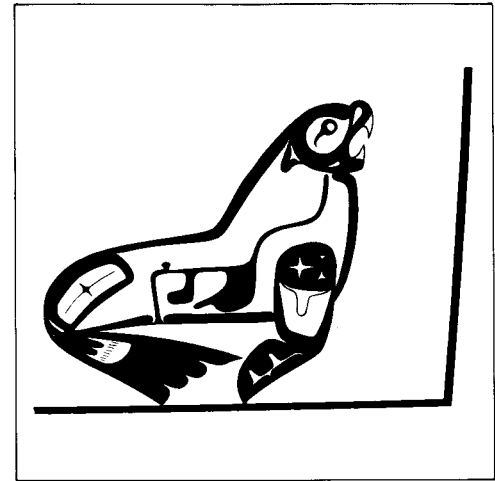


*I wish to tell you that this reserve that you have just spoken about is something that we don't wish for, for this reason; We don't want a reserve. This country originally belonged to our ancestors . . . and it is only quite recently that the Government sent men out here to measure this land immediately around us, and we were not notified of it when they did it; then the Provincial Government came in and sold the remaining land immediately around us. All the old camps up the Kispaiox river, where we used to gather our salmon, and our hunting camps, and where we used to pick berries, and what we most strenuously object to is that you insist upon us having this reserve. You have measured all these reserves and you say that that is yours . . .*

*We asked that the land which the Provincial Government had sold be returned or given back to us. The Bible is placed between us that we all act true - you gentlemen to speak the truth, the Interpreter to speak the truth, and I will speak the truth. We see it written . . . that the word of God is that a man is not to move another man's landmark. The land marked off for our ancestors was from mountain to mountain, and this is what the Government has picked up into small pieces. This is where our inheritances came from and where they were handed down from generation to generation, but now these have all been sold; therefore we ask that these be returned.*

CHARLES WESLEY,  
Band spokesman - Kispaiox  
April, 1915

## WHAT ARE CUT-OFFS?



Cut-off lands are those lands taken from Indian Reserves by the McKenna-McBride Commission. However, these cut-offs are only one way in which Indian Reserve land has been stolen.

As we have seen the problem of land losses from Indian Reserves arose soon after the first reserves were set up in the 1860's. Since then Indian Reserve land has been taken or lost in many ways. Both the Federal AND Provincial governments are politically and morally responsible for this theft of Indian land.

For example, the size of Indian Reserves has been whittled down by encroachment by whites, by government surveys, by reserve commissions, by Federal orders-in-council under the Indian Act, by Department of Indian Affairs' policies of surrender and sale, by Provincial denial of reserve allotments, by highway, railroad, and powerline rights-of-way, to mention just a few ways.

The problem of land losses is NOT restricted to those cut-off lands taken by the McKenna-McBride Commission. Any land stolen from an Indian Reserve is a type of "cut-off", even though the legal and political situation of these other types of land losses is different from the McKenna-McBride cut-off lands.

A just settlement of the McKenna-McBride cut-off lands will not prejudice the issue of these other land losses. A just settlement of the McKenna-McBride cut-off lands will not restrict the lost reserve claims of other Bands. Indeed, justice for the cut-off lands will be an important precedent of recognition of Indian rights and Indian land claims.

# THE CUT-OFF LANDS OF THE

BAND	RESERVE	ACREAGE
Alexandria	Alexandria No. 1	260 acres cut-off leaving 289 acres
Beecher Bay	Cryeke Point No. 3	2.5 acre reserve was cut-off
Beecher Bay	Wolf Island No. 4	11 acre reserve was cut-off
Chemainus	Oyster Bay No. 12	95 acres were cut-off leaving 201 acres
Clinton	Clinton No. 1	225 acre reserve cut-off except for graveyard
Kincolith	Gitzault No. 24	202.5 acre reserve was cut-off
Kitwanga	Squinlixstat No. 3	19.59 acres were cut-off
Lower Kootenay	Lower Kootenay No. 1	2,370 acres were cut-off leaving 365 acres
Metlakatla	Shoowahltans No. 4	16.82 acres were cut-off leaving 1.18 acres
Nawitti	Hope Island No. 1	37.86 acres cut-off leaving 8,514 acres
Nazko	Blackwater No. 1	35 acre reserve was cut-off

# McKENNA-McBRIDE COMMISSION

BAND	RESERVE	ACREAGE
Nazko	Ulka No. 3	157 acre reserve was cut-off
Nazko	Umlisle No. 4	128 acre reserve was cut-off. This was not cut-off by the Royal Commission but by the Ditchburn-Clark Report which altered the 1916 Royal Commission Report
Ohiat	Numukamis No. 1	588 acres cut-off leaving about 1,100 acres
Okanagan	Long Lake No. 5	128 acre reserve was cut-off
Okanagan	Mission Creek No. 8	50 acres were cut-off leaving 5 acres
Okanagan	Swan Lake No. 4	68 acre reserve was cut-off
Osoyoos	Dog Lake No. 2	71 acre reserve was cut-off
Penticton	Penticton No. 1	14,060 acres cut-off leaving 33,767 acres
Penticton	Timber Reserve No. 2	321 acre reserve was cut-off
Penticton	Timber Reserve No. 2A	194 acres were cut-off

## BAND

## RESERVE

## ACREAGE

Port Simpson/Metlakatla (in common)	Point Vetch No. 7	16 acre reserve was cut-off
Port Simpson/Metlakatla (in common)	Tsimshean No. 2	10,468 acres cut-off leaving 33,707 acres
Port Simpson//Metlakatla (in common) Port Simpson	Willaclough No. 6 Finlayson Island No. 19	29.07 acre reserve was cut-off 1179 acres were cut-off leaving 410 acres
Quatsino	Telaise No. 1	48 acre reserve was cut-off
Quatsino	Tsowenachs No. 2	55 acre reserve was cut-off
Seton Lake	Seton Lake No. 3	22 acre reserve was cut-off
Seton Lake	Seton Lake No. 4	27 acre reserve was cut-off
Sheshaht	Tsahahen No. 1	242 acres cut-off leaving about 790 acres
Songhees	Deadman's Island No. 2	0.5 acre reserve was cut-off
Squamish	Capilano No. 5	130 acres cut-off leaving 293 acres
Ulkatcho	Ulkatcho No. 1	4065 acres cut-off leaving 320. This was later amended to a 4003 acre cut-off leaving 382 acres. Because of this cut-off the Band mostly resettled at Anahim Lake
Upper Similkameen	Iltcoola No. 7	42 acre reserve was cut-off
Westbank	Tsinstikeptum No. 9	848.6 acres cut-off leaving 1,583 acres



*There are many of you. You are my friends. You are Indians. Are you proud that you are an Indian? Have you talked about how much leadership means to us and how powerful it is? Perhaps you don't realize we have been wronged as Indian people. We are snapping at him trying to get back the land he has taken. Don't you know of your history and all the things we have done and why we have come this far?*

*Don't be ashamed of your Indian heritage. The first time the white man came this to country, they never saw stores sitting around here. When the white man ran out of food, he became very hungry. He saw the Indian person and went up to the Indian and by sign language he got food. When he was hungry and the Indian turned around and said to themselves, the white man is not the same colour as us but he is the same, so he must be human. The white man became fat and he was not hungry anymore. He became well and he saw the gold in the creeks and he took that.*

*That my friends, you see what the white man has done. That is what he has done in his history.*

*The white man and the settlers that were here first said, let us bring our leadership and sovereignty over to this land. They brought papers and the Constitution across the waters over to this land. By what law do we allow ourselves to be confined on reservations?*

**TOMMY GREGORY,**  
*Okanagan Band - 1975*

# McKENNA- McBRIDE CUT-OFFS ISSUE TODAY



*Indian People demonstrate for land claims in Victoria, 25 June, 1974*

The 23 Bands with McKenna-McBride cut-offs have formed an Action Committee to push for a just settlement of this issue. The Action Committee seeks negotiations with both the Federal and Provincial governments. The Action Committee has patiently tried to get meaningful talks started.

On 8 January 1975 the Action Committee met with Judd Buchanan, Federal Minister of Indian Affairs. He repeated the Federal government's position of support and said that the Federal government is ready and willing to come to a settlement.

The main problem is the Province of British Columbia. The Action Committee calls upon the Province to enter negotiations. The McKenna-McBride Commission was a joint Federal-Provincial Commission. The Province was involved at every stage of the Commission's work, including the cut-offs. Today the Province has control over the cut-off lands. The Province of British Columbia has a legal, moral, and political responsibility to come to a just solution of this grievance.

The Action Committee calls for the province to recognize this responsibility and deal justly with the 23 Bands. The position of the 23 Bands for settlement is: Return of the cut-off lands where possible or alternate lands of equal worth.

On 4 March, 1975 the Action Committee met with the Provincial government. There were eight Cabinet ministers, including Premier Barrett. The meeting was a frank exchange of views. However, the Provincial government has not yet changed their policy on the cut-off lands.

The 23 Bands are tired of waiting and of being patient. The Bands are willing to settle and the Federal government is willing to settle. How about the Province?



## THE FIRST "CUT-OFF"

The McKenna-McBride cut-off lands issue and all the other land loss problems is different from the Indian Land Claim for Native Title. The Native Title claims deal with Indian ownership to all lands in British Columbia and is based on Indian aboriginal and sovereign right.

Lost reserve lands and cut-off lands deal with land lost AFTER the reserves were established. The setting up of the reserve system in British Columbia was a big defeat for Indian People. In effect, the reserve system cut-off Indian People from all traditional lands that were left outside the reserves.

The reserves are the remnants of our former sovereignty. All the rest of our land was cut-off. The imposition of reserves upon us was the first cut-off. For this confined us to small bits of land, denied us our rights of hunting and fishing, and discriminated against us in this development of water, grazing, mineral, and timber resources in our traditional territories.

The cut-off lands and lost reserve lands issues can only be the beginning. To win victories on these is the start of a process to regain control of our resources and our lands. To win victories on these will be a symbol for our growing movement. To win victories on these is essential if the effect of "the first cut-off" is ever to be erased.

The erosion of Indian land, rights, and culture has been a process for nearly one hundred years. The steady chipping away of Indian Reserve land is still continuing today. We must reverse this process now. The McKenna-McBride cut-off lands issue can be the turning of the tide. It can only be a beginning, but we need a beginning.

*Our people are sovereign, each tribe unto itself, and have been like that for thousands of years. We fought against white people and were conquered. And we've had to try a system of government that's foreign to us. We've tried this government and it failed. It's degraded our people and caused the ills that have fallen upon us. So we can see that the only way to regain what we've lost, regain our relationship with the Mother Earth, is to go back to the system of government that's done so well for us for so long. Sovereignty means the ability to guide our own lives, the ability to even make mistakes if that's what it takes. We know the way we want to live, and how we want to survive. We know how to live with the world, instead of on it, or off it, or against it. What it all boils down to is how we can make things better for our people.*

WOUNDED KNEE - 1973

Accursed be the race that has seized on our Country and made women of our warriors. Our fathers from their tombs reproach us as slaves and cowards. I hear them now in the wailing winds . . . the spirits of the mighty dead complain. Their tears drop from the wailing skies. Let the white race perish. They seize your land, they corrupt your women, they trample on the ashes of your dead! Back whence they came, upon a trail of blood, they must be driven.

TECUMSEH - Chief of the Shawnee Nation