



JOINT PRESS RELEASE

CONFEDERATED TRIBES OF THE COLVILLE RESERVATION & SINIXT (Sḥáýckstx)
CONFEDERACY

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Sḥáýckstx (Sinixt) Confederacy and Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation Issue Statement on Vallican Cultural Site and Marilyn James

NESPELEM, WA.— Andy Joseph Jr., Chairman of the Sḥáýckstx (Sinixt) Confederacy and the Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation, released today the following statement regarding the cancellation of the Memorandum of Understanding between the Province of British Columbia and Marilyn James for the Vallican cultural site:

The Sḥáýckstx (Sinixt) Confederacy and the Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation (CCT) strongly support the Province’s recent decision to cancel the MOU with Marilyn James respecting the Sḥáýckstx cultural site at Vallican. Vallican is the final resting place for many of our ancestors, some of whom were repatriated after many Sḥáýckstx people stood on the “line” on the blockades in the late 1980s.

Truth and reconciliation is never an easy or comfortable process. The recent decision of the Supreme Court of Canada in *R v. Desautel* has finally opened the door for meaningful reconciliation for Sḥáýckstx people on both sides of the border. A critical part of the reconciliation process is for all non-Indigenous people, including government, to ensure they are listening to and working with legitimate and duly authorized Sḥáýckstx voices.

Marilyn James is a registered member of the Kamloops Indian Band, and an Okanagan member of CCT. At no time have the Sḥáýckstx appointed her as a “matriarch” or any other kind of representative for our people, nor have we given her responsibility to care for our ancestors at Vallican. Ms. James represents herself, and an unidentified group of non-Indigenous people, not the Sḥáýckstx. This was specifically confirmed by the BC Supreme Court when the Autonomous Sinixt was known as the Sinixt Nation. It was therefore entirely appropriate for the Province to terminate the MOU.

Purporting to assume a position of authority, and the sacred responsibility for the care of our ancestors (including now “occupying” the site), without authorization from the Sḥáýckstx, is a form of cultural appropriation, and contrary to our laws and traditions. That is particularly so when personal financial benefits are obtained. The Confederacy and CCT stand against all forms of cultural

appropriation, including the baskets from another Indigenous group that have been passed off as Sn̓ʔáyckstx baskets, and are now resident in a local museum.

It is events like the celebration on June 10, 2022, grounded in our culture and traditions, that will truly advance the truth and reconciliation process. We again thank those that attended that event, and look forward to working with everyone in the months ahead to protect and sustain all of our territory, including the Vallican heritage site.

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About the Colville Tribes:

Today, more than 9,354 descendants of 12 aboriginal tribes of Indians are enrolled in the Confederated Tribes of the Colville. The twelve tribes which compose the Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation include: ščəlámxəx^w (deep water) or Chelan; walwáma (Wallowa people) or Chief Joseph Band of Nez Perce; s̓x̓^wyʔilp (sharp pointed trees) or Colville; šnt̓iyátk^wəx^w (grass in the water) or Entiat; sn̓ʔáyckst (speckled fish) or Lakes; mətx^wu (blunt hills around a valley) or Methow; škwáxčənəx^w (people living on the bank) or Moses-Columbia; nspilm (prairie) or Nespelem; uknaqin (seeing over the top) or Okanogan; palúšpam (people from Palouse) or Palus; sənp̓ɫ^wilx (grey mist as far as one can see) or San Poil, and šnp̓əšq^wáwsəx^w (people in between) or Wenatchi.

About the sn̓ʔáyckstx (Sinixt) Confederacy: Formerly known as the Arrow Lakes Aboriginal Society, the Confederacy has been established to represent sn̓ʔáyckstx people on both sides of the international border, regardless of tribal or band affiliation, in a manner consistent with Indigenous law and traditions.