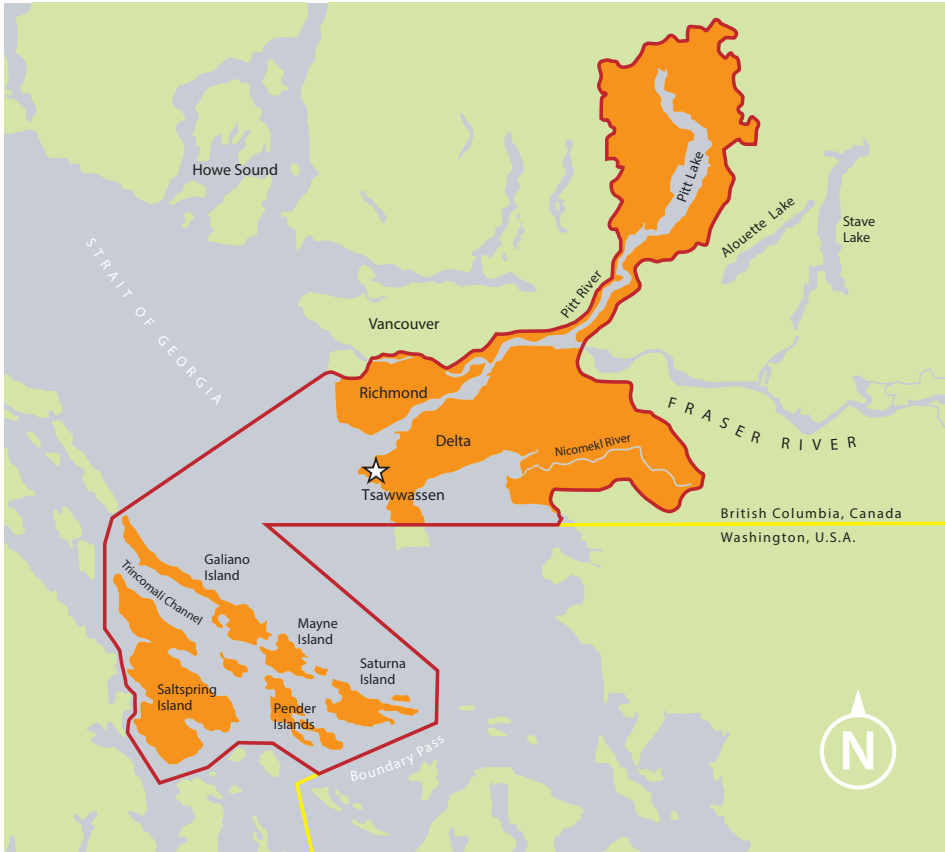




TSAWWASSEN FIRST NATION  
s̓c̓awaθən məsteyəx<sup>w</sup>

# TSAWWASSEN FIRST NATION BEGINNINGS



“Tsawwassen” means “land facing the sea”. For thousands of years Tsawwassen people travelled the Lower Fraser River, and Salish Sea (Georgia Strait). Our people fished, traded and lived in various parts of south coastal B.C. and north coastal Washington. But our home was centred in the area most of our people now live:

Tsawwassen  
s̓c̓awaθən məsteyəx<sup>w</sup>

## We’ve Been Here a Long Time

We say our people have been here “since time immemorial”. Archaeologists say humans have lived in south coastal B.C. for 9,000 years. Carbon dating from sites in our area shows that our people were here at least back to 2260 B.C., containing proof of our continuous use of these lands to the present. Traditional knowledge including legends and our ancestral names confirm our continued occupation of this area.

Our ancestors were accomplished fishers, and salmon and sturgeon were the mainstays of our traditional diet.

We have over 460 Members today, with approximately half of them living on Tsawwassen Lands. Many of our other Members live in the North Okanagan, B.C., and in the Bellingham, Washington areas.

## Our Traditional Territory

Our land base is deeply connected to our identity. Our Traditional Territory is bordered on the northeast by the watersheds that feed into Pitt Lake, down the Pitt River to the city of Pitt Meadows, where they empty into the Fraser River. It includes Burns Bog and part of New Westminster, following the outflow of the Fraser River just south of Sea Island. From Sea Island, it cuts west across the Salish Sea to Galiano Island and includes all of Saltspring, Pender and Saturna Islands. From there, our territory continues northeast to include the Point Roberts Peninsula and the watersheds of the Serpentine and Nicomeckl rivers.



## Our Elders

Our Elders are the strength and wisdom of our Nation. They are a source of inspiration and guidance for many in our community. They also are the memory of our community. They preserve and pass on our language, our culture and our traditional heritage. They guide us on important matters of our new Government. Many of our Elders have said they never thought they'd live to see a treaty reached with Tsawwassen, B.C. and Canada and are grateful we have dealt with this unfinished business.

## Our Resources

Traditionally, our resources were based on fish. Salmon, sturgeon, crab, and eulachon were our primary food resources and remain a key part of our traditional lifestyle. We still harvest salmon, crab and eulachon. Fish continues to provide for cultural and social processes that are very important to our identity, our past and our future.

## Our Systems

Traditionally, food was abundant. For centuries, we had a trade and barter system, and specialized services, such as processing of resources, were exchanged. Through our longhouse culture, we had extensive practices and ceremonies that dealt with governance functions. Our longhouse systems also ensured the redistribution of wealth to make certain our people could survive. Experts continue to learn how complex these practices were and still are.

## Our Future

On April 3, 2009, the Tsawwassen People ratified the first urban First Nations Treaty in B.C. It was the culmination of 14 years of negotiations. It reconciled our aboriginal rights and title and restored our right to First Nation self-government, protected in the Canadian Constitution. The Treaty provides us with municipal, provincial and federal types of jurisdiction over a land base of 724 hectares. So far, we have 29 laws that replace the Indian Act on Tsawwassen Lands and in our Traditional Territory. Tsawwassen First Nation also became a full member of Metro Vancouver and Mayors' Council on Regional Transportation.

For the Tsawwassen People, the Treaty has given us a cause for much hope, optimism and comfort – to know that we once again control our destiny. We are now going through a period of revival and renewal as we plan our future and seek opportunities to sustain our growth physically, economically and culturally, for present and future generations.

### Contact Us:

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