Perry Ridge - Sinixt Cultural Wetlands

Perry Ridge is culturally significant to the Sinixt People because it is one of the last intact alpine wetlands within the Slocan Valley, which for thousands of years was used, and is still used, by the Sinixt in continuation of their cultural practices.

At the north end of Perry Ridge is the village of Slocan, where the Slocan River drains southward from the Slocan Lake and the mountainous drainage of the Valhalla Park. This confluence represents one of the last year round occupied villages of the Sinixt peoples on the beautiful sandy shore of Slocan Lake. Sinixt rock paintings and burials have been identified along the Slocan lake shore and are evidence of the cultural significance of the Slocan Lake drainage.

From this location the Sinixt accessed all of Perry Ridge to its southern most point. On the west side of Perry Ridge the Little Slocan Lakes have been identified as a Sinixt site where a heritage trail connects Perry Ridge to the Lower Arrow Lakes. On the east side of Perry Ridge, where the Slocan River lies at the base of the mountain, Sinixt ancestral remains have been repatriated and reburied. These burial sites culturally significant sacred sites that continued erosion threatens to expose sites. Protection of the prominent steep, drainages that are a unique terrain aspect of Perry Ridge will help protect further damage to the grave and cultural heritage village sites. Repatriation and reburial of the ancestral remains of the Sinixt have taken place all along Perry Ridge. At the southern end of Perry Ridge lies the Sinixt Village of Valliean. Sinixt burials at Valliean nestled next to the Slocan River date back thousands of years. The Valliean village site represents the return of the Sinixt to the northern part of their traditional territory. The Sinixt peoples utilize the Valliean site throughout the year where they host community events at this Sinixt Village site they consider to be the seat of Sinixt governance. Of particular cultural significance is that this location is where the Sinixt conduct their traditional Winter Dance ceremony.

Perry Ridge provided sustainability to the cultural practices of the Sinixt. Because of the unique high elevation old growth forests the mountain still offers sustainability if it's bio-diversity is protected. The unique botany on Perry Ridge provides the Sinixt with many of their traditional medicinal and edible plants, which include unique mosses, avalanche lilies and a plethora of dry, alpine and wetland plant species. Traditional basket making materials are also part of the vegetation that provides sustainability to the continued cultural practices of the Sinixt.

Perry Ridge is home to culturally significant species at risk i.e. birds of prey. Screech owls, red tailed hawks, eagles, goshawk, herons (get list). The rock faces, with their bluffs and caves have a highly valued habitat for coyotes, bears and cougars. These animal species are highly significant to the Sinixt culture. Spearheads and many other artifacts have been found on Perry Ridge which predate arrow heads and identify Perry Ridge as a very old traditional hunting and trapping area.

Included in species at risk and extremely significant is the bull trout found in bordering drainage tributaries of Perry ridge represented by the Little Slocan on the west and in the Slocan River on the eastern isle of Perry Ridge. Many of the tributary drainages to these two river systems represent highly sensitive and rare spawning habitat for the bull trout. Sinixt feel a significant responsibility for this particular species as the word "sinixt" means 'the place of the Bull Trout'. As evidenced by the Sinixt name bull trout and other unique resident species of fish have always played an important part of the Sinixt culture. As a result of the dams within Sinixt traditional territory salmon no longer play the role a salmon fishery once historically represented and so bull trout and other resident species take on a greater significance. The Sinixt are working to protect this fisheries which in many cases is on the brink of collapse. Perry Ridge will play a vital role in the restoration of the bull trout fisheries in both the Little Siocan and Slocan River. The tributary streams, which drain from the high water table on the south and the wetland bogs on the north, are an important part of the food
chain for fisheries in both river systems. These same streams from the old growth alpine forests
offer the highest quality drinking water to contemporary settlements at the base of Perry Ridge.

The Sinixt have lost many cultural and heritage sites which have been destroyed by development,
especially the dams that destroyed rock paintings, burials, and village sites as well as culturally
significant low elevation habitat. Because Perry Ridge represents a unique land mass as a key drainage
and tributary of the Slocan and Little Siocan River systems it defines necessary and rare habitat. In
addition these two rivers represent the remaining undammed rivers in the entire Columbia River
Drainage where the cultural practices of the Sinixt peoples is intrinsic with the sustained habitat of
Perry Ridge.

- Toby Spribille, lichenologist states, :"One ofthe crust lichens I collected on Douglas-fir hark
  on the hand-cut trail up to the bedrock meadow seems to be narrowing down to being a new
  species to science in the genus Claurouxia, which in tum is a new genus for North America.
  Quite exciting really, and I couldn't really believe it, but I had a chance while in Norway last
  week to study specimens of the only other known Claurouxia species, from Scandinavia, and I
  see no reason why the samples from Perry Ridge should not be this genus. I also asked at least
  one of the experts there to study my drawings and he agreed ....... It certainly should be taken
  into consideration when making land management decisions on Perry Ridge, because in a very
  real sense, this is the only locality known for this little crust period."

The Sinixt supports the addition of Perry Ridge to Valhalla Park to protect its cultural and biological
values.
October 18, 2000

Brian Simpson
District Manager
Arrow Forest District
Columbia Ave.,
Castlegar, BC

Re: Recommendations - Perry Ridge

The Sinixt Nation supports the recommendations from June Ryder, PhD., P. Geo., Frank Baumann, P. Eng., Trevor Jones, P. Eng. and Allen Isaacson, Hydrologist, which are attached.

The Sinixt Nation is the First Nations Representative for the Slocan Valley. We were acknowledged as the representative at the COREPilot Project table for the Slocan Valley.

We have attached the Sinixt record regarding the LRUP table. The table clearly does not represent our interests. The enclosed recommendations do address our interest regarding terrain instability on Perry Ridge. We support the Perry Ridge Water Users Association and the scientific teams: recommendations. These recommendations accepted and followed by the Ministry of Forests will ensure the safety to life, limb and property of community members living at the base of Perry Ridge, and which include the Sinixt members of the community in Vallican as well as The Vallican Burial Grounds and village site at the southern base of Perry Ridge.

Yours truly,

Marilyn James,
Appointed Spokesperson
Sinixt Nation
The interests of the SINIXT Peoples have been made known to the Ministry of Forests and to other sectors through several planning and consultation processes, including CORE. These interests have remained unchanged throughout:

- Protection of cultural, heritage and burial sites including traditional food sources
- Continued representation of Arrow Lakes Nation in resource and land-use management decision-making processes within Arrow Lakes traditional territory
- Protecting the cultural and spiritual integrity of the land and environment
- Promoting the recognition of the true traditional boundaries of the Arrow Lakes Nation
- Continuing, an inherent responsibility of respecting the environment
- Protection of water quality for continued renewal of life-forms within the ecosystem

Promoting the concept of responsibility to future generations through protection of the quality and quantity of resources and environment.
May 29, 1992

To Whom It May Concern,

My name is Gordon Mohs. I am currently employed as a heritage consultant with the Sto:lo Tribal Council in Sardis, British Columbia.

In 1981, I directed archaeological excavations at the Vallican Site (DJQ 1) in the Slocan Valley, Southeastern British Columbia. As project director, I was responsible for preparing a preliminary report on investigations conducted at the site. This report, entitled: "Archaeological Investigations at the Vallican Site (DJQ 1), Slocan Valley, Southeastern British Columbia, 1982" is currently on file at the Archaeology Branch, Parliament Buildings, Victoria B.C., V8V 1X4.

In preparing the preliminary report on our findings, considerable time and effort was spent researching the native peoples of the region, including various aspects of their culture history. A synthesis of this information is presented in the report (pp. 30-73).

Based on my research, I would like to affirm both the existence of the Lakes (or Sinixt or Sngaytkskstx) Indians and the fact that they traditionally occupied a considerable tract of territory in the West Kootenay region of British Columbia, including the area covered by the Vallican archaeological site. As noted in my report, many members of the Lakes tribe migrated (around the turn of the century) and took up residence on the Colville Reservation in Washington State. Others took up residence elsewhere in the Canadian Plateau area.

Attached to this letter is a copy of the what I have written on the Lakes Indians. Also enclosed is a copy of my Vitae.

I am willing to swear that the statements I have made in this letter are true.

Sincerely yours,

Gordon Mohs
"Heritage Consultant
Sto:lo Tribal Council

Witnessed by:

Vincent Harper
Biolongist
Sto:lo Tribal Council

This 29th day of May, 1992.
Ms. Jacqueline Heywood  
The Coalition of Supporters of the  
Sinixt/Arrow Lakes Nation  
SO5 - 1102 Gordon Road  
NELSON BC V1L 3M4

Dear Ms. Heywood:

Thank you for your letter of May 26, 1995 concerning the decision of the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development (DIAND) not to provide test case funding (TCF) for an appeal by Robert Watt in the case of Watt v. Liebelt and Minister of Citizenship and Immigration. Your letter also raises the issue of the extinction of the Arrow Lakes Indian Band.

Funding was refused on the basis that the benefits of the appeal, if successful, would flow to non-Canadian Aboriginal persons. Given the limited resources available, DIAND takes the position that TCF should be dedicated to issues of importance to Canadian Aboriginal peoples. This determination has been made on the basis of a thorough review of the circumstances of Mr. Watt's case, and I can see no reason to reverse the decision.

With respect to your inquiry concerning the Arrow Lakes Band, I have no knowledge of the document to which you refer. The Arrow Lakes Band ceased to exist as a band for the purpose of the Indian Act when its last member died on October 1, 1953. By this is meant that, as a consequence of death and transfer to other bands, there were no longer any persons who qualified for membership in the Arrow Lakes Band under the provisions of the Indian Act. It does not, of course, mean that the Sinixt people ceased to exist as a tribal group.

I trust that my response addresses your concerns.

Yours truly,

Ronald A. Irwin, P.C., M.P.

Canada
This map shows the traditional territory of the Sinixt, or Lakes, Peoples in contemporary times. 43 Lakes villages are shown as documented by Verne Ray in 1936 and published in the "Pacific Northwest Quarterly".