

# Coast Salish First Nations

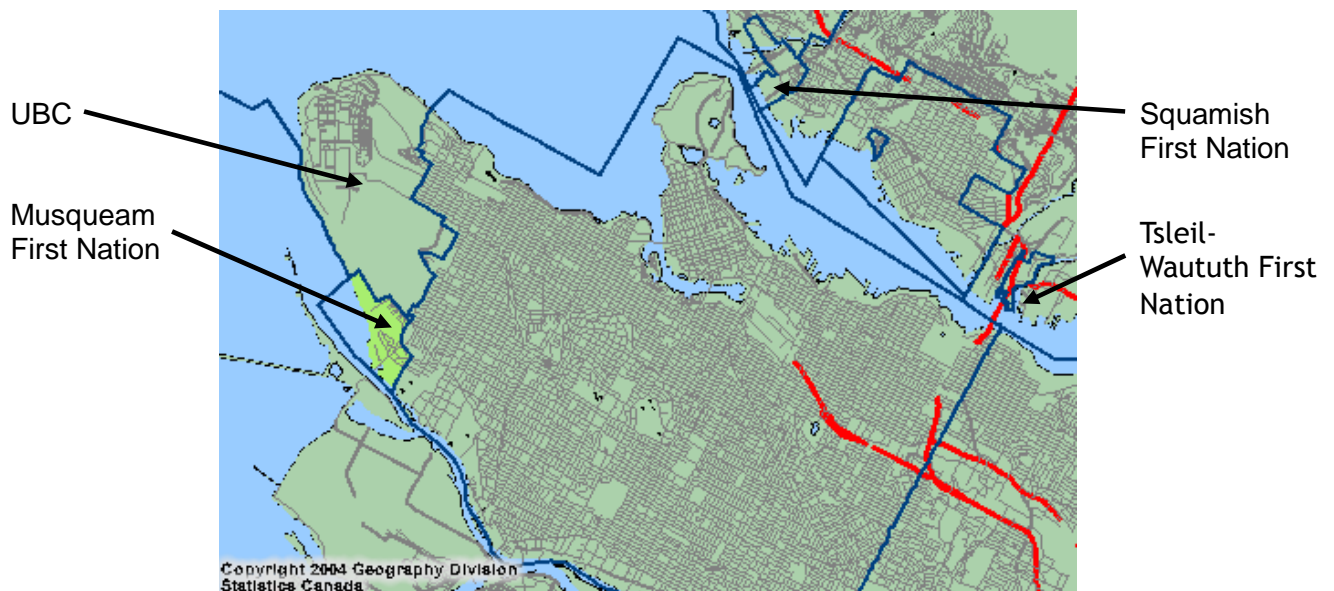
## Traditional Territories

Vancouver is bounded by three local First Nations who have lived in this area for thousands of years. All three are members of the Coast Salish Nation. They are the Musqueam, Squamish, and Tsleil-Waututh. While their traditional territories are overlapping, today they are each based on their own reserve lands in Vancouver, North Vancouver, and partly into West Vancouver. The only one located in Vancouver proper is the Musqueam First Nation which is located south of Marine Drive near the UBC Endowment Lands (as shown in the map below).

Each of the three local First Nations has a rich history and culture that is tied to the land that is their traditional territories. None of these First Nations has signed a treaty ceding their traditional territories. All three are at some point in the six-step BC Treaty Process. More specific information can be found at [www.bctreaty.net/files\\_3/first\\_nations\\_lower-mainland-fraser-valley.html](http://www.bctreaty.net/files_3/first_nations_lower-mainland-fraser-valley.html).

## Reserves locations, size, population

- **Musqueam** First Nation is located just south of Marine Drive near the UBC Endowment Lands, has an on-reserve Aboriginal population of 530 people living on a 1.91 square kilometre reserve (Social Indicators Report, COV)
- **Squamish** First Nation's largest community is in North Vancouver at the end of the Lions Gate Bridge and in mid-North Vancouver, has 28 villages on 28.28 sq. km, 1,941 of their 3,292 members live on-reserve. ([www.squamishnation.net](http://www.squamishnation.net))
- **Tsleil-Waututh** First Nation's largest community is in North Vancouver just east of the Iron Workers Memorial Bridge, has 1,203 on-reserve members (2001 Aboriginal Population Distribution in the GVRD by Census Tracts)



## Schooling

None of the three First Nations operate on-reserve schools, so their members attend school in the adjoining municipality or city. All three have some form of adult learning opportunities, especially in relation to upgrading to grade twelve levels.

## Employment & Economic Development

All three of the First Nations have some level of employment-based programming and social services that are staffed mostly by Band members, while some members work off-reserve.

Both Squamish and Tsleil-Waututh First Nations are in a more advantageous location and situation than Musqueam First Nation, primarily due to their locations at the foot of Lions Gate and Iron Workers Memorial Bridges and the larger size of their reserves. This has enabled both First Nations to create partnerships with large private business to build and operate businesses on their reserves. This has led to increased revenues from leasing and increased employment for their members. While Musqueam First Nation also has some leaseholds, shipyards, and a hotel, their opportunities are much more limited than the other two local First Nations.

## Issues

The three local First Nations have all of the same issues that other on or off-reserve Aboriginal communities have. The main difference in comparison to the off-reserve urban communities is that their on-reserve population is in one or two small, centralized areas that can exacerbate issues unless there are strong cultural traditions and good social services to help prevent and/or positively address the issues.

Musqueam First Nation, which is the only reserve in Vancouver proper, has an added dimension in relation to the old leaseholds that continue to be an ongoing issue. More info can be found at [www.musqueam.bc.ca/Leaseholders.html](http://www.musqueam.bc.ca/Leaseholders.html). Each First Nation has a newsletter that can be found and/or subscribed to online at the websites listed below.

## Relationship with Municipal Governments

There continue to be many challenges when building relationships between local municipalities and the three local First Nations. The following are issues that to various degrees are present in all relationships:

- The on-reserve status of First Nations often leads municipalities to treat them as a federal responsibility rather than fully engaging them as neighbours who can contribute to the municipality in many ways
- A reluctance to acknowledge the local First Nations as having a unique position as the first inhabitants of the area, even though their traditional lands have never been ceded and they are all in the BC Treaty Process
- First Nations want to be formally consulted in many areas, but municipalities are not always open to seeking or including input
- Often when non-First Nations want to consult with the local First Nations or invite them to speak at or open an event, the uncertainty about whose territory the event is happening on can sometimes be a deterrent to inclusion. The local First Nations acknowledge that their traditional territories are over-lapping, but the perception in non-Aboriginal communities is that there is ambiguity and tensions surrounding this issue between the three First Nations. The City of Vancouver would do well to work with the

local First Nations to identify a process that can ensure the inclusion of the three local First Nations in City processes, initiatives, and events.

## Inclusion

A local First Nations representative can usually be found to participate in private, government, or cultural activities, but it is very important for municipalities to ensure that they are working with the appropriate people in relation to the First Nation in order to develop and maintain good working and neighbouring relationships. Protocols should include working with each of the three Band Councils to:

1. Identify who their official representatives should be in specific circumstances. This may not always be Band Council representatives, and could be a number of different individuals who have expertise in specific areas.
2. Under what circumstances they would want someone involved, and what that would entail (i.e. opening of an event may include an opening song and/or prayer, inclusion on committees or with delegations)
3. When the specific representatives are available, including lead time for request
4. Appropriate way to make the request
5. How to contact the representatives
6. How to acknowledge their participation (i.e.: publicly at event, traditional gift such as a blanket, honoraria, inclusion in overall event)

★ *It is important to remember that Band Chiefs should be acknowledged and treated as respectfully as any other dignitary. It is also important to know the great importance that is placed on Elders who are held in high esteem as the culture bearers and teachers within the Aboriginal communities. This is true for all First Nation communities.*

## Additional Information

More detailed information about the local First Nation's history, traditional territories, culture, community initiatives, current news, Leasehold Agreements, their place in the BC Treaty Process, Band Chief and Councillors names, and contact information can be found online at:

**Musqueam First Nation**  
**Tsleil-Waututh First Nation**  
**Squamish First Nation**

[www.musqueam.bc.ca](http://www.musqueam.bc.ca)  
[www.burrardband.com](http://www.burrardband.com)  
[www.squamish.net](http://www.squamish.net)