

# Sinixt Ethnohistory

A summary overview of Sinixt traditional territory and village areas

Compiled by  
Ministry of Attorney General  
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Ethnohistoric reports are intended to inform the Province's preliminary assessment of **strength of claim for Aboriginal Rights and Title** as enshrined in Section 35 of the Constitution Act of 1982.

The research focuses on a few criteria which include **dates (contact and sovereignty) as well as use and occupation** as put forward by the Courts as part of the tests necessary for establishing Aboriginal Rights and Title.

## Ministry of Attorney General (MAG) Ethnohistoric Reports

- The focus of research of the Sinixt Ethnohistory is limited to the period between direct European presence in the Arrow Lakes area (1811) through the assertion of British sovereignty (1846).

# Sources

- Fur traders, missionaries, surveyors, ethnographers
- Field books, maps, fort journals, correspondence, ethnographies
- Alexander Ross (1821), Father De Smet (1842), James Teit (1909), William Elmendorf (1935), Verne Ray (1936)
- Much of the information gleaned from primary sources is on the authority of the Indigenous people with whom non-Indigenous visitors met and worked

From Teawaxamux

A long time ago (probably before the introduction of horses) a small party of Thompson people went traveling to the East. Most of them were from the Lytton Division, and some were from Thompson River above Lytton. After visiting in the Nicola country where they hunted elk, and fished in the lakes during the spring, they went over to the people of Okanagan Lake where they stayed for a ~~few~~ while. From there they crossed the mountains with some Shuswap or Okanagan Indians, and visited the Lake people somewhere along Columbia River or Arrow Lakes. Later along with some Lakes, ~~and~~ others, they went ~~from~~ over to the Stikine or Kootenai country. In the fall whilst still in the Kootenai country or on their way back to their own country they stopped somewhere in the mountains to hunt. Whilst engaged hunting their camp was attacked by a large party of Flat-bows. Several of the Thompson were killed. ~~Some~~ <sup>the</sup> men who ~~were~~ <sup>happened to be</sup> out hunting, and others escaped. To avenge this a war party of Thompsons chiefly from the Lytton neighborhood went over to Kootenai the following year. The war chief of this party was a noted warrior, and shaman who's chief manitou was the Grizzly Bear. He was noted as a man intrepid, and relentless in war. The Flat-bows knew the Thompson would send out a war party for they ~~had~~ were noted at that time as a tribe of good fighters, and always avenged any of ~~their~~ <sup>act</sup> ~~on~~ <sup>all</sup> their hostile acts. They were afraid of the Thompson, and whom they considered a ferocious people, and called by the names of 'Savages', and 'Cannibals'. They sent to another part of the country for a very great shaman who could see a long ways over the world, and the power of putting people to sleep. They paid this shaman to watch one day the shaman told the people "Now the wild man eaters are coming all painted and decked for war. They act, and run along



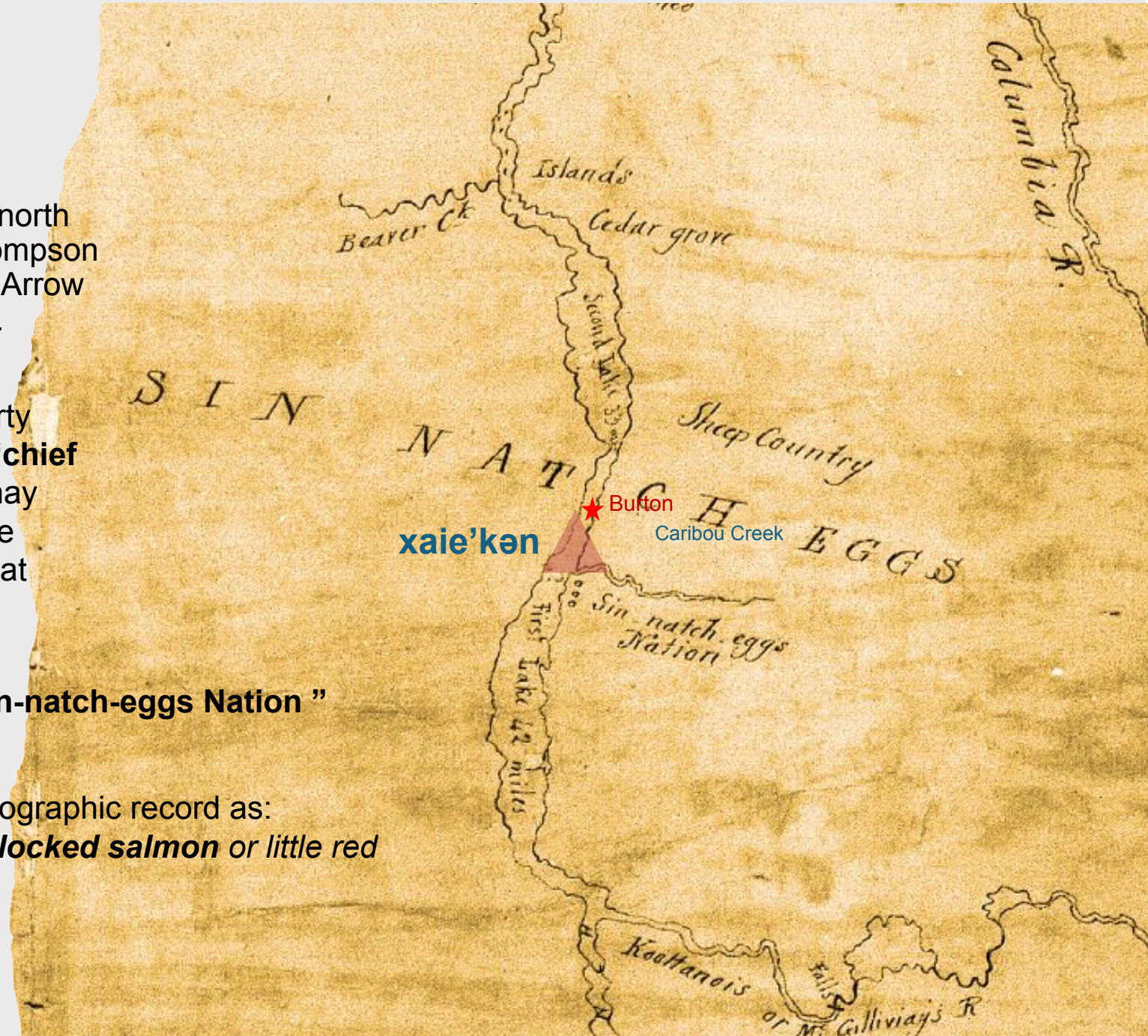


# Lakes (Sinixt) Traditional Territory

- This map was compiled and published by the **British Columbia Provincial Government in 1956** as part of the *British Columbia Atlas of Resources* project. The map shows the names, distributions, and relationships of Indigenous territories and language groups “at a time just before intensive European settlement, that is, about 1850” (*BC Atlas of Resources*, BC Natural Resources Conference, 1956:25).

# First meetings

- In **1811**, fur trader **David Thompson** travelled north along the length of the Arrow Lakes. There Thompson encountered Indigenous populations along the Arrow Lakes but did not identify any people by nation.
- In **1821** fur trader **Alexander Ross** and his party encountered a man identifying himself as the “**chief of the Sinatcheggs**” and the “son of a Kootenay chief” who had been forced, by warfare with the Blackfoot, to leave Ktunaxa country and settle at Arrow Lakes around 1790.
- Ross indicated a village site and labelled it “**Sin-natch-eggs Nation**”
- In the 1930s this village is identified in the ethnographic record as: **xaie’kən** and “A center for the **catching of land-locked salmon** or little red fish”



# Missionaries

Station St. Pierre Gens des Lacs de la Col<sup>a</sup>

Montagnes que separe les Shuyelpi ou chaudieres des Okinakanes

Jesuit priest **Father Pierre Jean De Smet** travelled to North America and spent several years establishing missions on the Columbia River. De Smet produced a map of the Northern Rocky Mountains and Plateau based on his time spent between 1842-1848 with Indigenous people living in the region then-called by Europeans "Oregon Territory". His detailed, albeit difficult to read, map locates the Catholic mission "**St. Peter's Station**" of the "**Gens des Lacs de la Col<sup>a</sup>**" (**Lakes People of the Columbia**) on the west side of Upper Arrow Lake at 1842.

American Missionary Samuel Parker (1835-36) 1840: "**the Lake Indians, so named from their place of residence, which is about the Arrow Lakes. They are about five hundred in number**.... At the south, and about Colville, are the Kettle Falls Indians [Sxwei'7lhp/Skoyelpi]. Their number is five hundred and sixty.... At the west and North-west (Okanagan Valley), next in order, are the Okanagans, numbering one thousand and fifty"



# Ethnography

•Anthropologist **William Elmendorf** conducted ethnographic fieldwork with the Spokane and Lakes people in 1935 and 1936. His main Lakes consultant was **Nancy Wynecoop**. According to Wynecoop the Lakes “originally settled around Revelstoke” and that “over 100 yr. ago [ca. 1830s] the Lakes retreated down from around Revelstoke.”

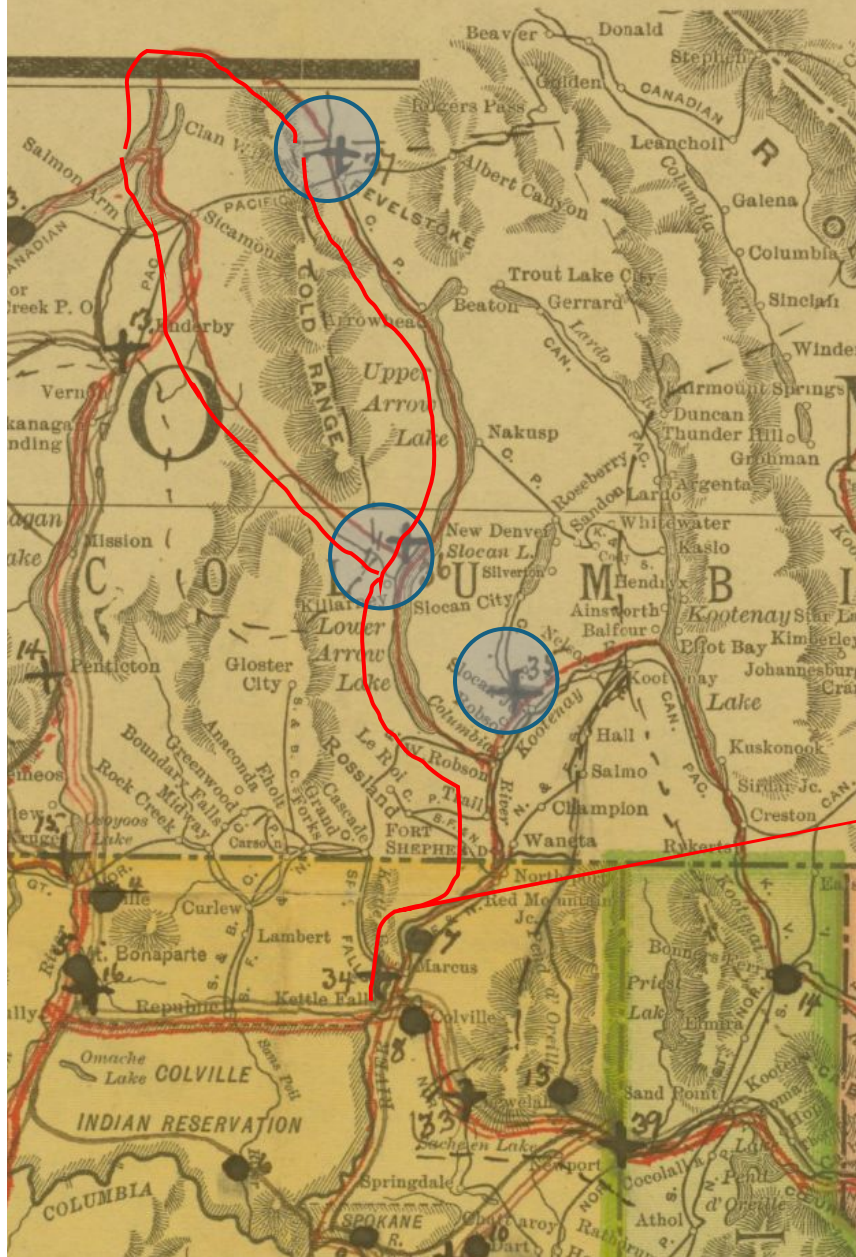
•In 1909 ethnographer **James Teit** received information regarding Lakes settlements from two consultants, **Mary Christian** and her mother **Antoinette**, who were living at that time at the mouth of Kootenay River. Teit visited the area to map the distribution of Salishan dialects and learn about the movements of Indigenous groups before Europeans arrived. He constructed “what is probably a full list of the old villages and main camps of this [Lakes] tribe within British Columbia”.

•Teit also illustrated 7 areas that were identified as “**important headquarters of Lakes**”. According to Teit’s consultants, the Lakes’ original home was at Marcus.



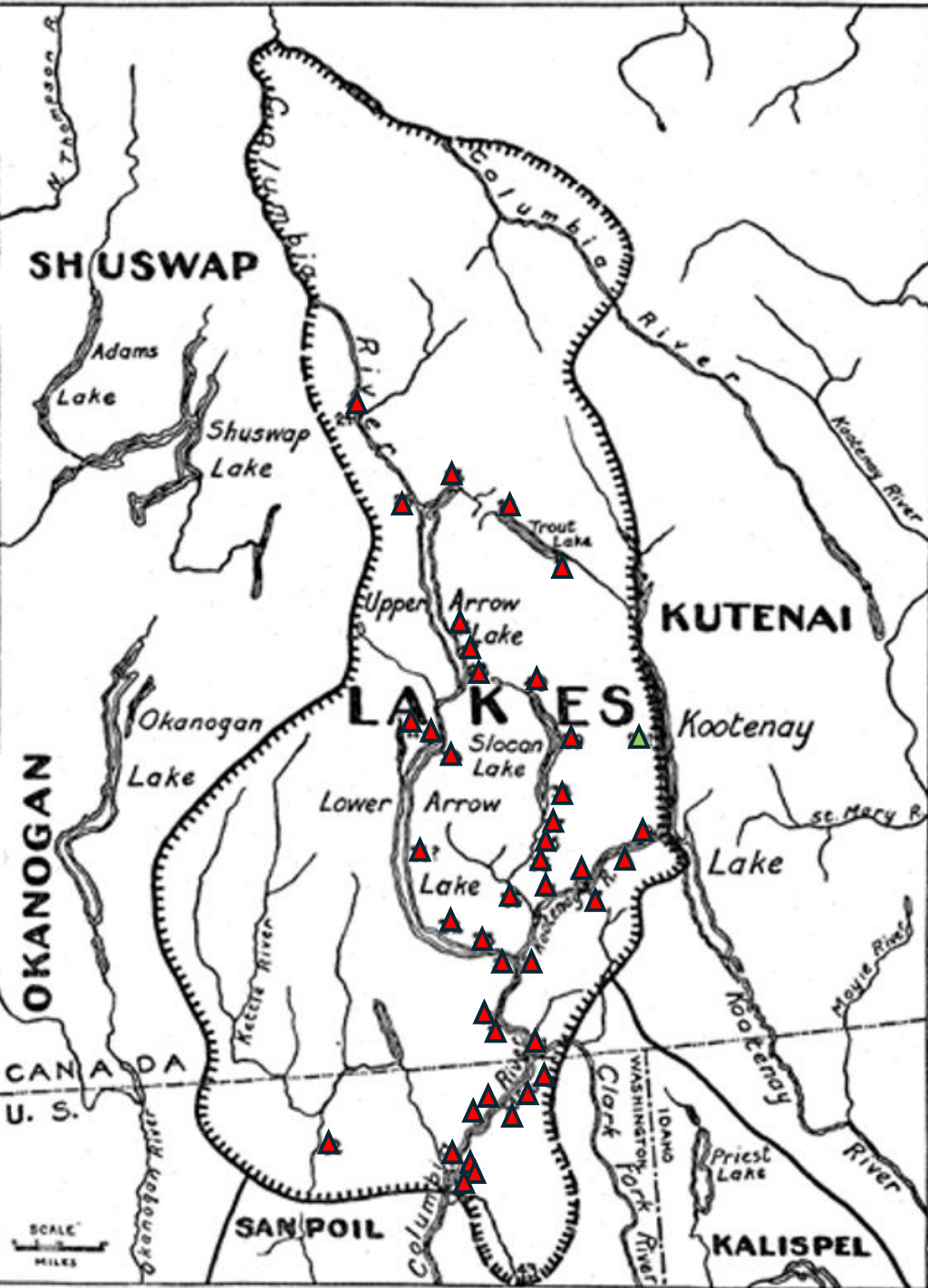


Rand, McNally & Co.'s



## Trade Routes and Points of Trade

- Trade from Kettle Falls moved north “following the Columbia to Arrow Lakes and Revelstoke, where the Shuswap were met” (Teit 1930).
- Shuswap “came into touch with the Lake” by two main routes; one of which was “by way of the Fire Valley [Inonoaklin Creek] and Caribou [Whatshan] Lake to the upper end of Lower Arrow Lake” and the other “farther north to the Columbia River at Revelstoke”.
- Points of Trade (Teit):
  - 35.** At the mouth of Slocan River, Lake traded here with Lower Kutenai.
  - 36, 37.** Trading points of Lake with Shuswap



# Sinixt Villages and Sites

Beginning in 1928, Anthropologist **Verne Ray** undertook substantial ethnographic **fieldwork among the Lakes and other Nsəlxcin-speaking** people. Ray's information was obtained directly from Indigenous consultants. Ray's principal consultants included people from **Kalispel, Coeur d'Alene, Spokane, Sanpoil, Nespelem, Skoyelpi, and Lakes** communities.

Ray's **main Lakes consultant** was **James Bernard** - about 80 years old in 1931. He would have been born shortly after the Canada/US border was established. Ray wrote that Bernard was "...the best informed and oldest surviving member of his group.... From early in the present century until his death in 1934 he was chief of the few surviving members of the Lakes".

In working with knowledge-holders Ray was able to map **30 sites in Canada and 8 in the US** .

# Revelstoke

In the report of his reconnaissance of Eagle Creek, Turnbull noted the presence of a “plainly marked” and “old Indian hunting trail”. This trail is faintly identified in yellow and follows Eagle Creek to Three Valley Lake, to Skoukoncleu [Tonkawatla, Tumtum] River [empties into Upper Arrow Lake at Big Eddy]. The trail continues east along the Illecillewaet River into the Rockies after crossing the Columbia.

The hunting trail intersects the Lakes village **skøxi'køntøn**

- On the creek **opposite the present town of Revelstoke**. This place is said to have been **the headquarters of a rather large band**, which was reinforced at certain seasons by people from lower down the Columbia. It was noted as **a trading, trapping, hunting, berrying, and salmon-fishing center**.
- Lakes consultant, Nancy Wynecoop informed Elmendorf that the Lakes “originally settled around Revelstoke.”

Three Valley Lake



# Nakusp

## Plan of the Columbia River District (1865-1866)

Surveyor and mapmaker James Turnbull's illustration on which he outlined several trails traversing and connecting the Okanagan, Columbia and Kootenay river valleys.

Within the Arrow Lakes region, Turnbull marked trails, shown by red dashed line, that are specifically marked "Indian Pass" and connected Secwepemc and Sinixt territories.

- Pit house
- Pictograph

**neqo'sp** – A noted **fishing place** for salmon and lake trout

**tci'uken** – a center for **hunting**. Some fine **caribou grounds** were near this place.

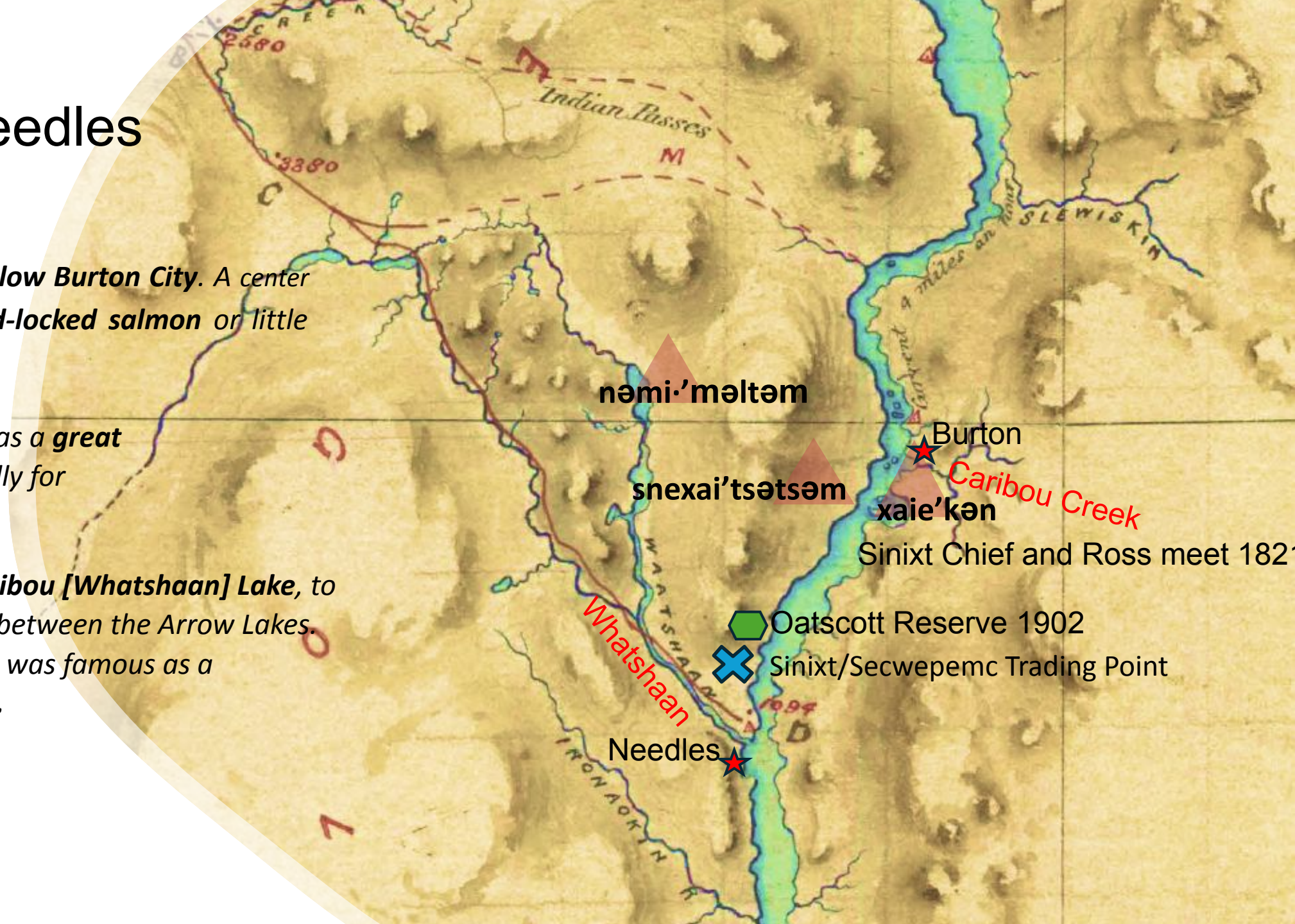


# Burton, Needles

**xaie'kən** – At a creek **below Burton City**. A center for the **catching of land-locked salmon** or little red fish.

**snexai'tsətsəm** – This was a **great berrying center**, especially for **huckleberries**.

**nəmi'məltəm** - On **Caribou [Whatshaan] Lake**, to the west of the narrows between the Arrow Lakes. The country around here was famous as a **caribou-hunting ground**.




**nəmi'məltəm**

**snexai'tsətsəm**

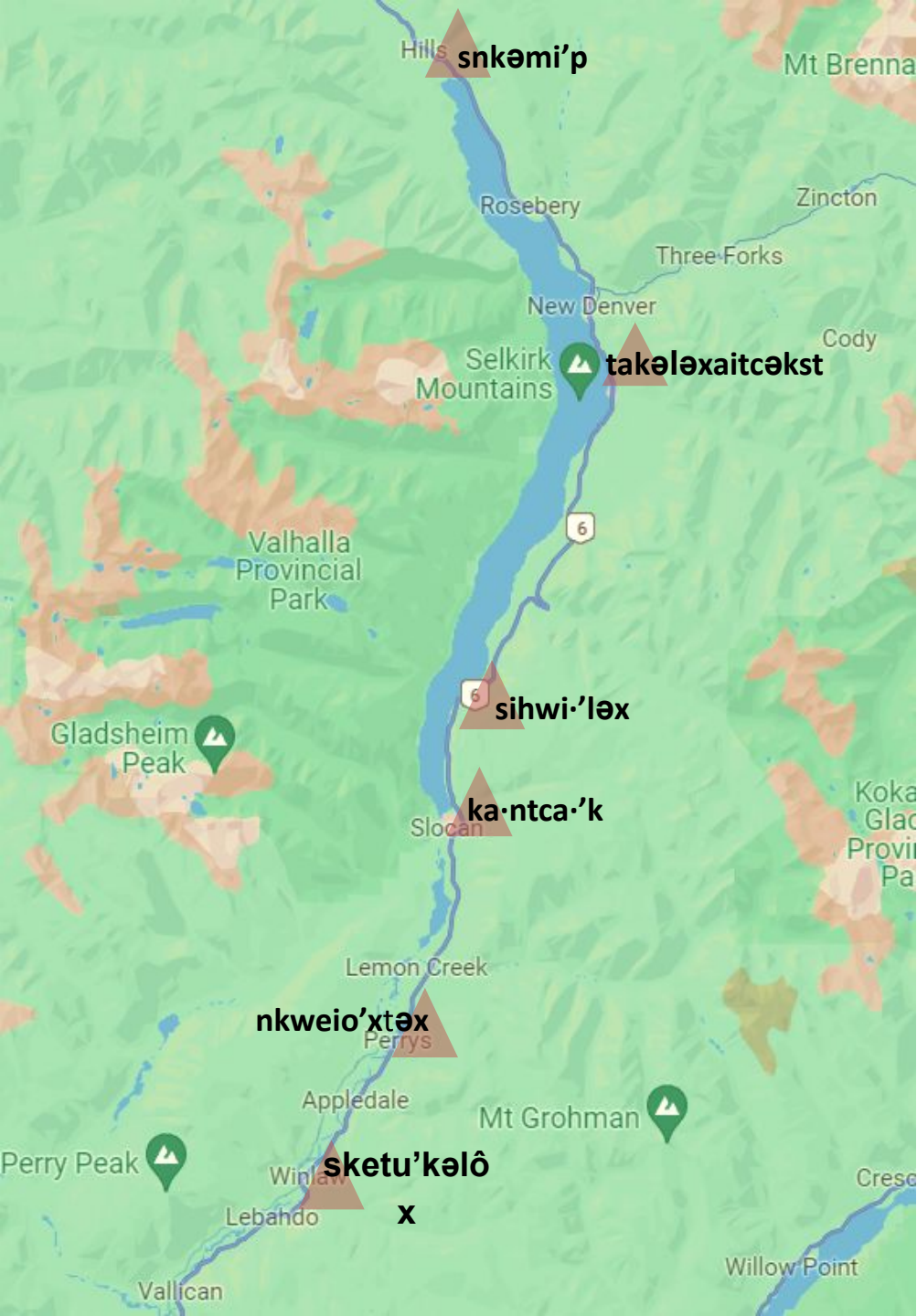
**xaie'kən**

Sinixt Chief and Ross meet 1821

 Oatscott Reserve 1902

 Sinixt/Secwepemc Trading Point

**Needles** 



# Slocan

## sihwi'ləx

Teit lists this location is **one of seven important “headquarters of Lake bands”**

## snkəmi'p

In 1890, geographer George Dawson submitted for publication in the Annual Report of the Geological Survey of Canada a detailed report of the geography of the West

Kootanie District including that of the Arrow Lakes in which he mentioned that there was a pass from Nakusp to Slocan Lake: “Another stream of comparatively small size, flowing in a mile and a half south of the last, is known as the Na-kusp. **[The trail] comes from a low and rather wide valley which is reported to be used by the Indians as a pass to Slocan Lake**” (1890:11B). This is likely the route along which today’s Highway 6 was built between the north end of Slocan Lake and Nakusp.

# Nelson, Castlegar, Waneta



nxa:xa'tsən  
Nelson  
k'iyä'mlup'

sketu'kəlôx

ntikuli'tk'

Arrow Rock  
plu'me'

Trading point – Lakes/Yakin Nukiy

sm·a'ip'

Cox Reserve 1861

Castlegar  
name unknown

kupi'tiks

snskəkəle'um

Trail

Waneta

tcəlxi't'sä

nguli'la'  
Fort Shepherd

49 Parallel





Questions, ideas,  
information...

Contact the  
Sinixt Office in  
Nelson, BC.  
([Sinixt.com](http://Sinixt.com)) or

Indigenous Legal Relations, Research Unit  
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