

# Powell River's Sliammon Community

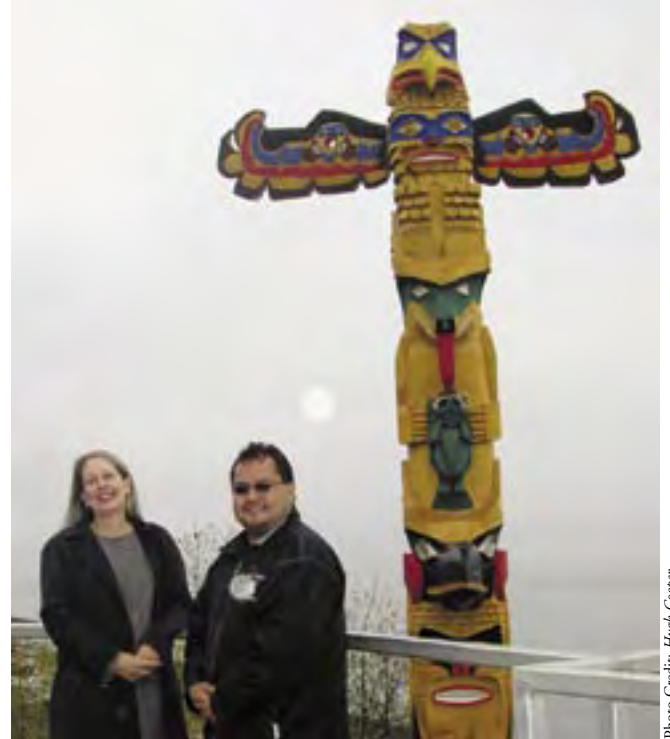


Photo Credit: Hugh Cooper

Leanne Rebantad and Maynard Harry in Powell River

Leanne Rebantad  
In Conversation with Maynard Harry

**O**n December 6, 2003, in a ceremony at Sliammon, the Sliammon First Nation signed an Agreement-in-Principle with the governments of British Columbia and Canada.

Included in the signing ceremony with Sliammon Chief Councillor Maynard Harry, Attorney General Geoff Plant, and Robert Nault, Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development for the Government of Canada, were Rose Louie, the oldest living elder of Sliammon and a five-day-old baby, Silas Kirklan Richard Williams, who left his footprint on the document.

Sliammon is one of approximately 20 nations of the Coast Salish people who inhabit the Pacific Northwest and the southern British Columbia coast.

Comprised of more than 900 members, the main community of Sliammon is situated on Sliammon Indian Reserve #1, just North of Powell River on the Sunshine Coast, approximately 130 kilometres from Vancouver, BC.

Sliammon Chief Councillor Maynard Harry took time from his busy schedule to answer questions about the Sliammon community and the Treaty process.

**Leanne:** *How long have you been Chief of the Sliammon Band?*

**Maynard:** I have served as Sliammon's Chief Councillor for two years. I previously served on Council for two consecutive terms, beginning in 1998.

**Leanne:** *I am looking at the photo of the signing of the Agreement-in-Principle; I am impressed that both the oldest and youngest members of Sliammon were included in the ceremony. The Sliammon community appears to have strong cooperation and involvement at all age levels, from youth to the elders. How do you achieve this?*

**Maynard:** I think as a community we come together willingly to celebrate the big, important events. We are getting better and more comfortable at being together. At times there is strong cooperation and involvement at all levels. Accomplishing something like this is difficult and never complete. I feel we are a long ways from achieving this. It will take many more significant accomplishments before the community is confident to put 100 percent support behind a government.

Some significant accomplishments would be: Community Accord and Protocol Agreement between Sliammon First Nation and the Corporation of the District of

Powell River and Agreement-in-Principle and Land Code Ratifications. I think we need to build on these accomplishments to a point where my entire membership recognizes the significance of these initiatives. Once Sliammon starts producing meaningful jobs, keeping people busy, and improving our standard of living, we will be able to say we have strong cooperation among these age groups. It is open to question as to whether we have accomplished this to date. A significant community division continues to exist.

**Leanne:** *You have actively participated in the Treaty process and have signed an Agreement-in-Principle, now in the Final Agreement stage. This must have involved a considerable amount of discussion and planning. What suggestions do you have regarding what is important when negotiating a successful agreement?*

**Maynard:** These Treaty negotiations did involve a considerable amount of discussion and planning. These discussions were and continue to be expensive. For me, the most important consideration when negotiating is the open and transparent principles all parties are bound to follow. I have seen many examples where these were not adhered to. A First Nation negotiating a Treaty must be

comfortable with negotiating away parts of its traditional territory in exchange for land and cash. First Nations must also be comfortable with negotiating away these lands for less than 1, 3, or 5 percent. If that comfort level is not there, don't initiate negotiations. Negotiations cannot take place if a First Nation refuses to participate. There are drawbacks to this position; there are drawbacks for any position.

**Leanne:** *Collaboration and cooperation between and among the parties is important to the negotiation process. When disputes arise in this negotiation process, how do you resolve them?*

**Maynard:** Disputes arise quite frequently, then the negotiation process suffers and slows down. Some disputes are minor; others are more significant. One example would be the province's approving two hardwood cutblocks within land identified by Sliammon First Nation as Treaty settlement lands. The Provincial Treaty Office okayed these lands as such, but the left hand—Ministry of Forests—approves these cutblocks to be harvested, thereby lessening the value considerably. This issue threatened Treaty negotiations and took a few meetings to resolve. Resolution was an Order in Council that went through the provincial legislature stating no more lands within these areas would be considered for harvest.

There are many more complicated examples. Resolution process is complex where the issues should be and are usually laid out and discussed at length. One party usually caves or negotiates a position. There is a lot of give and take.

**Leanne:** *In the Sliammon community, how do you resolve disputes and conflict?*

**Maynard:** Most disputes are dealt with by Sliammon's Chief and Council. Some are resolved; some aren't. Those of a personal nature are usually dealt with by the individuals. If there are community interests at stake, Sliammon's government takes a position and works to facilitate a resolution.

**Leanne:** *What is the importance to Sliammon of signing a Final Treaty Agreement?*

**Maynard:** Sliammon needs a Treaty. Not just any Treaty, but one that works for my community. A Final Agreement is being negotiated at present. My chief negotiator will work with his negotiators and my community to make a recommendation to Council. If Council accepts the recommendation to bring a Final Agreement referendum to the community, a referendum will be held. What this Final Agreement looks like today will be very different from what the Final Agreement will look like on vote day. Stage 4 of the Treaty process took over four years to complete. I would expect Stage 5, the Final Agreement negotiations, to take at least two years and as long as four years, as well.

**Disputes arise quite frequently, then the negotiation process suffers and slows down.**

**Leanne:** *Sliammon has been very progressive in development projects. What are some of the past and present projects in which Sliammon has been involved? What would you like to develop in the future?*

**Maynard:** In no particular order, some of the past projects were: Community

Accord, Protocol Agreement; the historic Lund Hotel; the Seawalk and waterfront infill project in the Westview harbour; the Agreement-in-Principle ratification; Bill C-49 Land Code ratification; the authority to initiate negotiations with over 60 Klahanie/Southview leaseholders; Joint Venture Initiate between Sliammon Development Corporation/Corporation of the District of Powell River/Norske Canada; Old Mermaid Plant re-opening; and improving the financial standing of the Band through stringent administrative measures. We have met many more milestones but those are the most prevalent.

As to what projects in future would be of benefit, I would consider them to be: the development of Harwood Island and Indian Reserve #3 (Cortes Island), I.R. #4 (Theodosia Inlet) and I.R. #5 (Okeover Inlet), and I.R.#6 (Grace Harbour).

Also, youth-oriented recreation projects, significantly more housing developments, and more involvement in the tourism sector.

**Leanne:** *For many years, Sliammon has shared its culture with the Powell River community. You have demonstrated the making of baskets and drums, performed ceremonial dances, offered tours of your salmon hatchery and sweat lodge, and your language has been taught at some of the public schools. How has this influenced*



*At the Signing Ceremony: Left to right: Seated, Rose Louie (elder); Silas Kirklan Richard Williams (the baby), held by Maynard Harry (Chief of Sliammon). Back left: Robert Nault, BC Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development. Far right: Geoff Plant, Attorney General of BC*

Photo Credit: Powell River Park

*your relationship with the Powell River community over the years?*

**Maynard:** This approach has only helped. The connections were already in place but nothing nearly as formalized as the Community Accord. Residents from both communities needed the political will of both governments to step out and demonstrate that we can work together. Political will is so important. The Community Accord provided residents on both sides a mechanism to try different approaches. Having the previous history together made things easier.

**Leanne:** *Can you compare the Sliammon community from 30 or more years ago to what it will be 10 years in the future? What changes do you foresee?*

**Maynard:** There have been and will be many more changes. There was not as much in-fighting then as there is now. Community members today are better informed. Social issues are more complex today. Our unemployment rates are higher; alcoholism has likely gone down. Drug use has likely gone up. The people are different. In the past there were more employment opportunities. Our population demographics have changed. Half our population is below the age of 25 years.

In 10 years, Sliammon will continue to be an advanced First Nation compared to others. I hope we will rival the efficiencies and effectiveness of any municipality. Our ability to generate significant revenues has increased tenfold. Our Land Code has been recently adopted; we will manage our lands more effectively than has occurred in the past. Life will be better in 10 years time. ▲

**Note:** Websites [www.sliammon.com](http://www.sliammon.com), [www.prcn.org/sliammon/index](http://www.prcn.org/sliammon/index) and [www.thesunshinecoast.net/sliammonband](http://www.thesunshinecoast.net/sliammonband) contain interesting information about the Sliammon First Nation. For further information about the Treaty process, visit [www.gov.bc.ca/tno](http://www.gov.bc.ca/tno).

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