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# INDIAN AND NON-NATIVE USE OF THE BIG QUALICUM RIVER

## AN HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

by Brendan O'Donnell

Native Affairs Division Issue 9  
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## INTRODUCTION

The following is one of a series of reports on the historical uses of waterways in New Brunswick and British Columbia. These reports are narrative outlines of how Indian and non-native populations have used these rivers, with emphasis on navigability, tidal influence, riparian interests, settlement patterns, commercial use and fishing rights.

These historical reports were requested by the Interdepartmental Reserve Boundary Review Committee, a body comprising representatives from Indian Affairs and Northern Development [DIAND], Justice, Energy, Mines and Resources [EMR], and chaired by Fisheries and Oceans. The committee is tasked with establishing a government position on reserve boundaries that can assist in determining the area of application of Indian Band fishing by-laws.

Although each report in this series is as different as the waterway it describes, there is a common structural approach to each paper. Each report describes the establishment of Indian reserves along the river; what Licences of Occupation were issued; what instructions were given to surveyors laying out these reserves; how each surveyor laid out each reserve based on his field notes and survey plan; what, if any, fishing rights were considered for the Indian Bands; and how the Indian and non-native populations have used the waterway over the past centuries for both commercial and recreational use.

Primary sources for this information are found in the National Archives of Canada, the Provincial Archives of New Brunswick, the Harriet Irving Library of the University of New Brunswick, the British Columbia Provincial Archives, the Hudson's Bay Company Archives, the Indian Land Registry at DIAND, and in the Legal Surveys Division of EMR. Secondary sources are found in the National Library of Canada, DFO's departmental library, DIAND's departmental library, or are brought in from other libraries throughout Canada on inter-library loan.

Each report in the series is being distributed to the Reserve Boundary Review Committee members. It is hoped each will make this research available to other members of their department by depositing the reports in their departmental library.

# *Indian and Non-Native Use of the Big Qualicum River*

## *An Historical Perspective*

*by Brendan O'Donnell*

The Big Qualicum River,<sup>1</sup> on the eastern side of Vancouver Island, British Columbia, has its headwaters in the Beaufort Range and flows in a southeasterly direction for approximately seven miles before discharging into Horne Lake. From the lake the Big Qualicum has an outlet located on the eastern section of the north shore and continues its flow in a northeasterly direction for about seven miles before entering the Strait of Georgia.<sup>2</sup>

The total drainage area of the Big Qualicum River is fifty-eight square miles, with the largest portion, forty-two and one-half miles, draining into Horne Lake. The balance of fifteen and one-half square miles drains directly into the river over its length between Horne Lake and the sea.

Horne Lake, which lies at an elevation of 392 feet above sea level, is approximately four miles long and three-quarters of a mile wide. Its total surface area is three square miles. Soundings have indicated that the maximum depth of the lake is 180 feet.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The Big Qualicum River, sometimes referred to simply as the Qualicum River, should not be confused with the Little Qualicum River. The latter has no physical connection with the former.

<sup>2</sup> Crippen Wright Engineering Ltd. "Report on Flow Regulation of Big Qualicum River." Prepared for Department of Fisheries, August 1959. Copy on file at the National Archives of Canada, RG 23, Volume 835, File 719-9-71(1).

<sup>3</sup> Department of Fisheries. "Big Qualicum River Fisheries Development Project." Vancouver: April 1961. Copy of file at the National Archives of Canada, RG 23, Volume 555, File 47.

Below the outlet of Horne Lake, the Big Qualicum River enters a narrow canyon and until the 1960s flowed for three-quarters of a mile over a succession of rapids and falls. [As will be discussed in more detail below, a flow-control dam was built on this spot in the 1960s]. The river dropped a total of approximately 190 feet in this length. Over the remaining river course to the Strait of Georgia, the Big Qualicum flows through a progressively wider valley over a gravel bed. The average rate of fall in this stretch is six feet per thousand feet. The average width of the stream bed below Horne Lake is approximately seventy feet.<sup>4</sup>

Only one major tributary, Hunts Creek, enters the lower portion of the Big Qualicum between Horne Lake and the Strait of Georgia. Hunts Creek has a discharge area of seven square miles, and originally discharged into the Big Qualicum approximately two and one-half miles above tidewater.<sup>5</sup>

As stated, most of the watershed area lies in the wooded mountains of the Beaufort Range, which has an average elevation of approximately 3,000 feet and is snow-capped in winter. The sides of the valleys at the headwaters of both Hunts Creek and the Big Qualicum above Horne Lake are sharply inclined with the result that heavy runoffs of short duration occur during periods of heavy precipitation. Prior to a flow-control dam being built on the Big Qualicum in the 1960s, the river was subject to

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<sup>4</sup> D.B. Lister and C.E. Walker, "The Effect of Flow Control on Freshwater Survival of Chum, Coho and Chinook Salmon in the Big Qualicum River." The Canadian Fish Culturist, No. 37 (September 1966). Copy on file at the National Archives of Canada, RG 89, Volume 720, Report 2952A.

<sup>5</sup> In the 1960s, a fish hatchery and a flow-control dam were built on the river. Hunts Creek, during this period, was diverted to discharge into the Big Qualicum below the hatchery.

extreme variations in flow. The maximum recorded discharge near the mouth of the river was 7,080 cubic feet per second [cfs], which occurred in February 1918. A minimum summer discharge of 10 to 15 cfs was recorded several times over a period of record from 1913 to 1922. The mean annual discharge at the river mouth was 286 cfs.<sup>6</sup>

The word "Qualicum" is derived from a Nanaimo Indian term for "place of the dog [chum] salmon."<sup>7</sup> Historical documents have several variations of spelling of this name, including Quall-e-hum, Quallchum, Kwalekum, and Kwan-le-cum.

The historical name of the Indian village at the mouth of the Big Qualicum River was Saatlaam or Saat-lelp, meaning "the place of the green leaves."<sup>8</sup> This was the site of an infamous mid-nineteenth century massacre, which saw the majority original Qualicum Indian Band butchered by a war-party of Haida Indians, the remainder carried off as slaves. A witness to this atrocity was a party of Hudson's Bay Company explorers, led by twenty-six year old Adam Grant Horne, who are believed to be among the first white people to have contact with this district.

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<sup>6</sup> Department of Fisheries, "Big Qualicum River Biological Survey 1959-60." Vancouver: January 1961. Copy on file at the National Archives of Canada, RG 23, Volume 837, File 719-9-71 (14). See also "Big Qualicum River Fisheries Development Project" and "Report on Flow Regulation of Big Qualicum River."

<sup>7</sup> G.P.V. Akrigg and Helen B. Akrigg, British Columbia Place Names. Victoria: Sono Nis Press, 1986, P. 248.

<sup>8</sup> (Robert Brown), Vancouver Island. Exploration. 1864. Victoria: Printed by authority of the Government, by Harries and Company, (1864), p. 25. A microfilm copy of this booklet is included in: "Western Americana: Frontier History of the Trans-Mississippi West 1550-1900." New Haven, Conn.: Research Publications Inc, 1975. Copy on file at the National Library of Canada, Mic. C-13, Reel 75, No. 753.

Horne recounted the tale of the massacre to W. Wymond Walkem in 1883, some twenty-seven or twenty-eight years after it took place. Walkem published the account in 1914.<sup>9</sup>

Horne told Walkem that he had been charged by the Hudson's Bay Company in 1855 "or thereabouts" to lead a party of six men up the east coast of Vancouver Island to ascertain whether a trail existed from the Big Qualicum River to the head of Barclay Sound on the west coast of the Island. He was told by Roderick Finlayson, the H.B.C. official in charge of Fort Victoria, that the natives living near the mouth of the Big Qualicum were believed to be of the same tribe as those at Cape Mudge.

Horne and his men approached the Big Qualicum in the very early hours of the morning and put in to shore about a mile south of the river's mouth. At about six o'clock, Horne was awakened by one of his men, who in a silent gesture pointed out the boat-loads of Haida Indians entering the mouth of the Big Qualicum.

We were fully awake without any loss of time, and from the edge of the timber we saw these large northern canoes enter the creek one after the other, and disappear behind the brush which bordered the banks of the stream. Then we took breakfast, and while doing so, thick volumes of smoke arose from the creek and poured down across the front of the timber where we lay concealed.

We waited patiently to see whether those [Haida] Indians would return or not. It was fully twelve o'clock before the first of them came into view in the lower reaches of the creek. We were horrified at the antics of these demons in human shape, as they rent the air with their shouts and yells. One or two of those

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<sup>9</sup> W. Wymond Walkem "Mr. Horne's Trip Across Vancouver Island," in Stories of Early British Columbia. Vancouver: Published by News-Advertiser, 1914, pp. 37-50. See also T.W. Paterson, "Massacre at Big Qualicum," in Ghost Town Trails of Vancouver Island. Langley: Stagecoach Publishing Col., 1975, pp. 89-94.

manning each canoe would be standing upright going through strange motions and holding a human head by the hair in either or both hands... In an hour's time they were all out of sight behind a bend in the shore line. There was no doubt in our mind but that we were about to face some dreadful tragedy.

Horne and his men entered the Indian village and found that the Qualicum Band had been annihilated. Most had been murdered and mutilated. Only one old woman was barely alive when the H.B.C. men arrived and, before she died a few moments later, she gave a brief account of the massacre.

They had all been asleep in the large rancherie when the Haidahs crept in with stealthy step, and more than half of those asleep were killed without awakening. The remainder were quickly killed, there being five Haidahs to one of themselves. She was wounded with a spear, but had seized a bow and fled to the side of the creek and had hidden herself beneath the bank. The Haidahs had taken away with them two young women, four little girls, and two small boys. This expedition was in revenge for the killing of one of the Haidahs when attempting to carry off the daughter of one of the principal men who live where the death currents meet (Cape Mudge).

Horne and his men continued their expedition in search of an Indian trail across the Island, which they soon found. The trail led to a lake, which we know today as Horne Lake, and then over the mountains to Alberni Inlet.

Less than ten years later, in 1864, another exploratory party of white men descended the Big Qualicum trail to the Strait of Georgia. Led by Robert Brown, the party represented the Vancouver Island Exploration Committee. They left Victoria on 7 June 1864 and by mid-October were at the head of Alberni Inlet. In his report published immediately after the party returned, Brown wrote:<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> (Robert Brown), Vancouver Island. Exploration. 1864.  
p. 24-25.

On the 14th [of October] we commenced our journey homewards, by crossing the island from the mouth of the Somass or Kleecoot River... to Quall-e-hum, on the Strait of Georgia, where, after an easy march we arrived on the 18th. The first portion of our route for six miles was through a very open thinly wooded fern covered country, well adapted for grazing... From here the route takes over a steepish ridge, 600 feet in height, from whence you descend to Horne's Lake, seven miles long. Keeping along by the borders of the lake until the end, we struck for the sea through an open thinly timbered track, gently sloping to the sea, and offering no impediment to travelling, with the exception of about half a mile of burnt and fallen timber, two miles from the coast. A five foot trail, fifteen miles in length, connecting the east and west coasts, could be easily constructed here at an average expense of seventy-five dollars per mile, and through the steep ridge mentioned might offer some obstacles to a wagon road,... for a pack trail this would be immaterial. The route along the banks of the Quall-e-hum River is very bad...

We found two camps of the warlike Euc-lat-aws camped on the Quall-e-hum... This territory, at one time belonging to the Qualle-hums, who are now extinct as a separate tribe, and their lands divided between the Euclataws and the Comouls, (or Sath-luths) whom we found camped further down the coast, on the site of their old village of Saa-tlaam or Saat-lelp, ("the place of the green leaves"). I hired a large canoe from the Chief of the Euclataws to take us to Nanaimo, where we arrived on the 19th,...

In May 1872, a twenty-mile trail was cut from the Big Qualicum River to Alberni Inlet, under the direction of Duncan Cameron.<sup>11</sup> Part of this trail is known today as the Horne Lake Road. Its construction heralded the advancement of white settlement into the district and the subsequent re-establishment of a permanent Indian village at the mouth of the Big Qualicum River.

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<sup>11</sup> Duncan Cameron to Surveyor General B.W. Pearse, 30 September, 1872. Copy on file at the Provincial Archives of British Columbia, GR 983, File 2/2.



By 1876, the continuing agitation over land between white settlers and native bands throughout British Columbia resulted in the establishment of a three-man Indian Reserve Commission to resolve what was then called "The Indian Land Question."<sup>12</sup> Alexander C. Anderson was the Dominion Commissioner, Archibald McKinlay was the Provincial Commissioner, and Gilbert M. Sproat was appointed Joint Commissioner, representing both levels of government. On 3 November 1876, the three Commissioners, along with Edward Mohun, Surveyor, and George Blenkinsop, census-taker and general assistant, left Victoria on their first excursion to visit Indian settlements and establish the boundaries of reserves.

On 13 December 1876, this entourage arrived at the mouth of the Big Qualicum River. A Minute of Decision was passed on that date creating a reserve for the Indians now living at that location. The Minute reads:<sup>13</sup>

Qualicum  
(Qualicum Indians)

A reserve to comprise about 200 acres has been decided upon, to include both sides of the river at the mouth.

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<sup>12</sup> The terms of agreement establishing this Indian Reserve Commission are found in federal Order-in-Council P.C. 1088 of 10 November 1875, and provincial Order-in-Council of 6 January 1876. A copy of the former is on file at the National Archives of Canada, RG 2/1, 10 November 1875. A copy of the latter is printed in: British Columbia, Papers connected with the Indian Land Question 1850-1875. Victoria: Richard Wolfenden, 1875, pp. 169-170.

<sup>13</sup> Copy of the Minute of Decision is on file at the National Archives of Canada, RG 10, Volume 1273. Microfilm C-13900.

Seven days later, on 20 December 1876, Joint Commissioner Gilbert Sproat explained to the Minister of Interior in Ottawa the circumstances surrounding the creation of this reserve:<sup>14</sup>

I wrote to you last from Comox. The Commissioners left that place on the 13 inst., and steamed towards Qualicum ...

The Qualicum is a small river which flows from Horne Lake into the Gulf of Georgia.

An easy trail, which might be improved into a good road at a moderate expense, leads from this point across the Island to the head of the Alberni Canal on the west coast of Vancouver Island. The distance is said to be about 13 miles in a straight line from salt water to salt water, or about 18 to 20 miles by the trail. Had it been summer, we could have gone from this point to Alberni, but at this season, our return might have been prevented by snow, and we therefore did not attempt to cross.

There is a small prairie at each side of the mouth of the Qualicum River. About a mile back from this shore the only white settler in this neighbourhood has his holding.

We found three rather well built houses at the mouth of the river, constructed in a style half like an Indian house and half like a frame house. Only about half a dozen Indians were present; the others were at Nanaimo working.

The houses were dirty inside. Externally they looked clean and new.

On inquiry we found that these Indians had lived for many years past at Nanaimo.

They removed to Qualicum about a year and a half ago. We saw 10 hens and a small patch of potatoes.

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<sup>14</sup> Copy on file at the National Archives of Canada, RG 10, Volume 11028, File SRR-1. Microfilm T-3967. See also RG 10, Volume 3611, File 3756-4. Microfilm C-10106.

The Indians who claimed land at Qualicum numbered 8 men, 9 women, 2 male youths, 6 male children and 4 female children - 29 Indians altogether.

No Indian Reserve existed at Qualicum. The question was whether there had been an Indian settlement, and whether it was desirable to make a reserve at Qualicum.

The Commissioners examined the ground, heard all that the Indians present had to say and determined to make further inquiries, and to consider the matter further at Nanaimo.

They finally decided to make a reserve of about 200 acres, to include both sides of the river at the mouth. Probably about 30 acres along the shore are clear of trees. There is some fair soil on this reserve.

The considerations which influenced my mind in agreeing to this decision were the following.

It did not seem to me to be clearly made out that the Qualicum was an old Indian settlement.

The appearance of the ground favoured this view, but there are signs of ancient residence by Indians along the banks and shores of so many rivers and bays in this province, which have not been occupied by Indians within the memory of man, that too much weight must not be given to this description of evidence. The Indian population was probably more numerous at one time than it now is.

I could not find that anyone had seen at Qualicum within ten years past, Indian huts of at all a permanent character.

The somewhat exposed situation of the mouth of the river on the open shore of the Gulf; the difficulty of landing in stormy weather; the smallness of the river, which though an excellent trout stream and frequented by salmon, cannot afford any large supply of the latter fish, were against any probability of Qualicum having ever been a considerable permanent Indian settlement. A village at Qualicum, moreover, would have been peculiarly open to attacks from the tribes on the west coast of Vancouver Island.

On the other hand, the Indians, claiming Qualicum, vehemently asserted that the place was an old Indian settlement, and that they were entitled to the place, partly by descent and partly by intermarriage, and they

said that, lately, they had been working for white men at Nanaimo and elsewhere, but that they and their fathers, had been accustomed to use Qualicum for a place of residence as well as fishing.

It is possible that some of the claimants may be descended from or may have intermarried with the descendents of, Indians who were in the habit of spending a considerable part of the year at Qualicum.

The Nanaimo Indians, on being questioned, said this was the truth, but the most respectable Indian evidence on such a point is not very trustworthy. The Indians may have gone lately to Qualicum from Nanaimo or Comox; and may have built houses and cultivated a patch, simply to strengthen the claim which they proposed to make to the Commissioners for land there.

These various considerations kept my judgement in suspense for some time with respect to this matter, but I think the reserve made at Qualicum may be useful, both to the Indians and to the public generally.

Comox and Nanaimo are 61 miles distant, and the Indian Reserves at both places are not larger than is necessary. There will not be except at Qualicum, any Indian reserve between them ...

It is useful to white settlers, and to employers of labor generally, to have Indians within reach, somewhere outside of the settlement.

They carry messages, act as labourers, and bring game and fish to market, or ought to do so, did not their laziness prevent them.

It may be convenient in many ways, to have Indians near the place on the east coast of Vancouver Island from which the west coast is most easily communicated with particularly as the place does not offer much inducement to white settlers ...

The Qualicum ... Indians speak a dialect of the Cowichan language.

On 6 February 1877, E.A. Meridith, Deputy Minister of Interior, acknowledged receipt of Sproat's letter and informed him that his report would "be brought under the early notice of the Superintendent General" of Indian Affairs.<sup>15</sup>

George Blenkinsop, who accompanied the Commission as census-taker, indicated in his census report that there were twenty-nine people living at the mouth of the Qualicum River, led by a Chief named Sah'lth Kum, known by the English name of Tom. In a notational remark in his census report, Blenkinsop wrote:<sup>16</sup>

These well built houses on this reserve, but filthy within.

These Indians have for many years past lived at Nanaimo.

They removed to their present abode about 18 mo. [months] since, and seem determined to go to work in earnest to make it a good home.

A small patch planted this season in potatoes.

On 21 March 1877, the three Indian Reserve Commissioners signed the formal report to the Minister of Interior, explaining their work of the previous five months. Of the Big Qualicum River Reserve, they wrote:<sup>17</sup>

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15 Copy on file at the National Archives of Canada, RG 10, Volume 3662, File 9756(2). Microfilm C-10116.

16 Copy on file at the National Archives of Canada, RG 10, Volume 3645, File 7936. Microfilm C-10113.

17 "Report of the Proceedings of the Joint Commission for the Settelement of Indian Reserves in the province of British Columbia, respectfully submitted for information of the Honorable the Minister of the Interior." Copy on file at the National Archives of Canada, RG 10, Volume 3645, File 7936. Microfilm C-10113. See also RG 10, Volume 1273. Microfilm C-13900.

Having concluded operations at Comox we struck camp at 3.30 a.m. 13th December, and succeeded in getting away a little after six o'clock, having a long run before us.

Stopped at Qualicum River, about midway between Comox and Nanaimo, and examined the village there with its surroundings, which we secured to the occupants, marking a tree as elsewhere and indicating generally the limits. Reached Nanaimo after dark ...

On 26 April 1877, the three Commissioners sent British Columbia Indian Superintendent I.W. Powell a notebook containing a rough sketch of the Qualicum Reserve, presumably drawn by Surveyor Edward Mohun, and a copy of the Minute of Decision. A letter accompanying this and other maps in the notebook reads:<sup>18</sup>

We hand you herewith some sketches and notes which will assist you in giving instructions to the Surveyors of the reserves when the time comes for their employment.

The lines of the boundary of the Qualicum Reserve on the rough sketch clearly do not include the mouth of the Big Qualicum River, but the boundary line does cross the river at the west end of the reserve.

On 21 November 1878, Surveyor Ashdown H. Green laid out the boundaries of the Qualicum Reserve. No specific letter of instruction to Green concerning this reserve could be found during this present search of documents. Green's field notebook contains a sketch of the Qualicum Reserve.<sup>19</sup> A map, that includes the signature of Joint Commissioner Gilbert Sproat, was also drawn during this period, presumably based on the

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<sup>18</sup> Copy on file under "Indian Reserves Near Vancouver and Adjacent Islands. I.R.C.", BC 44A, at the Surveys and Mapping Branch, Legal Surveys Division, Energy, Mines and Resources Canada, Ottawa.

<sup>19</sup> Copy on file under BC 238 at the Surveys and Mapping Branch, Legal Surveys Division, Energy, Mines and Resources Canada, Ottawa.

field notes of Ashdown Green. A notation on the map indicates that the Qualicum Reserve was 197 acres.<sup>20</sup> This map also indicates that the boundary lines of the reserve do not include the mouth of the Big Qualicum River but do cross the river at the west end of the reserve.

Ten years after the reserve was laid out, Indian Agent W.H. Lomas supplied further information on the origins of the group of Indians inhabiting the mouth of the Big Qualicum River. In his Annual Report to the Superintendent General of Indian Affairs, dated 19 August 1887, Lomas wrote:<sup>21</sup>

One peculiarity about this band is that all speak the Chinook jargon. Some of the old people are acquainted with the Cowichan language, and others with the Puntledge, between which tribes their village formed a sort of debatable ground. Some of the present members were raised as slaves by the Tsimpseeans and afterwards claimed by Chief Mahoy; thus the band having no general language, the Chinook has been adopted and the children speak no other.<sup>22</sup>

By the turn of the twentieth century, title to Indian land in British Columbia was still a contentious political issue. In

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<sup>20</sup> A copy of the map, titled "Plan of Nanoose and Qualicum Indian Reserves, British Columbia" and filed under TBC 225, is available from Surveys and Mapping Branch, Legal Surveys Division, Energy, Mines and Resources Canada, Ottawa.

<sup>21</sup> Canada. Annual Report of the Department of Indian Affairs for the year ended 31st December, 1887. Ottawa: Maclean, Roger & Co., 1888, p. 106.

<sup>22</sup> The Chinook jargon was a language of trade first developed by white traders and Indians on the coast of Oregon, Washington and British Columbia. The basis of Chinook is the language of the Chinook Indians of Oregon, supplemented with words of Nootka origin, to which were added others of French, English and Spanish derivation. To this was then added words from the language of the local Indians. See Encyclopedia Canadiana, Volume 2. Toronto: Grolier of Canada, 1977, p. 358.

1913, a Royal Commission on Indian Affairs for the Province of British Columbia was established to solve this problem whose roots dated back to the Indian Reserve Commission and before. During the life-span of the Indian Reserve Commission, which existed from 1876 to 1910, over 1,000 Indian reserves had been allotted in the province. But while these reserves had been approved by the provincial Chief Commissioner of Lands and Works, no formal recognition by the British Columbia government was ever given these reserves in the guise of Orders in Council or publication notices in the B.C. Gazette.

In 1912, Dr. J.A.J. McKenna, representing the federal government, and Premier Richard McBride of British Columbia signed a document, now known as the "McKenna-McBride Agreement", establishing a five-man Royal Commission to investigate and report on Indian lands in the province.<sup>23</sup> The Royal Commission was given the power to adjust reserve acreage by reducing the size where the Commissioners deemed the Indians had more land than needed, to determine the area to be added in cases where bands had insufficient land, and to set aside reserves for bands that had not yet received any. The Commissioners were also authorized by a separate federal Order in Council of June 1913 to gather information on issues which, although extraneous to the terms of the McKenna-McBride Agreement, were nevertheless considered to effect the rights and interests of the Indian population. From 1913 to 1916 the Royal Commission travelled the province compiling evidence.

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<sup>23</sup> A copy of the McKenna-McBride Agreement is on file at the National Archives of Canada, RG2/1, 3 February 1930, Order in Council P.C. 208.



On 30 May 1913, the Royal Commission spent a few hours at the Qualicum Reserve to hear the views of the local Indians. A transcript of this brief informal meeting reads as follows:<sup>24</sup>

QUALICUM TOM (CHIEF) stated: -

The population is 14, all living here, five of whom are at the Boarding School, but when not at school these five live on the Reserve. The extent of the Reserve is 197 acres, all good farming land. They have one horse, two cows and two calves. There are 18 acres cultivated. They have over 100 fruit trees, including apple, pear and plum trees. They have 5 or 6 sheep, which graze over on the Island.

Asked by the Chairman if he had any complaints to make, the Chief said: -

"I want the Commission to look into the matter of an encroachment on the South Boundary, by the salt water. There was a new post put in about two years ago on the beach, about 300 yards north of the original post. There is a new post where the old post was, marked "T.C." and put in by myself. The other post is marked "O.M."

THE CHAIRMAN: - Are there any bearing trees near?

A. No, there were no bearing trees near.

Q. Are there any other troubles with white men here?

A. No, no other trouble.

MR. ROBERTSON (Indian Agent) here explained that the Chief is afraid the Commission has come to take away his land.

THE CHAIRMAN (To the Indian Agent) Tell him we have come to give him and the other Indians fair play.

THE CHAIRMAN: - How much land have you on this reserve.

THE CHIEF: - 160 acres.

THE CHAIRMAN (To the Indian Agent) The reserve calls for 197 acres, and he says he only has 160. How is that?

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<sup>24</sup> Copy on file at the National Archives of Canada, RG10, Volume 11024, File AH3. Microfilm T-3962.

THE INDIAN AGENT: - He does not know exactly how many acres there are in it. It is only his idea that he has 160 acres, from what someone told him.

No mention is made in the transcript of testimony of fishing on the Big Qualicum River.

A précis of the evidence given to the Royal Commission was also developed. This précis reads as follows:<sup>25</sup>

On Friday the 30th May the Commission made visitations to the reserves at Nanaoose [sic] Bay and Big Qualicum, no formal meetings being held but the few Indians domiciled at these reserves being incidentally examined...

At Big Qualicum the chief, Qualicum Tom, reported a resident population of fourteen on the 197 acres comprising the reserve, this population including five children now attending school at Alberni. All others of the band have left to work with white people or engage in various occupations as wage earners. On the reserve are 1 horse, one cow, two calves, and a number of hens. Qualicum Tom reports having about eighteen acres cultivated, mostly in pasturage. He possesses an excellent orchard of about 100 trees, principally apples, pears and plums. Below the road the land generally is too dry for agricultural utilization. About the place are good substantial rail fences and buildings in a good state of repair.

The Indians formerly used this place for a fishing station but may not this year as they claim that the Japanese have come in and to a large extent cleared out the salmon. The fishing station buildings are at present in bad repair. Complaint was made by Qualicum Tom that his boundary stakes at the southern boundary of this holding by salt water had recently been removed to diminish the acreage in his possession; road building had also taken off seven feet from one side of his location, reducing it by about seven acres...

The précis concludes with a description of the care being given a young female member of the band who was sick with tuberculosis.

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<sup>25</sup> Copy on file at the National Archives of Canada, RG10, Volume 11024, File AH3A. Microfilm T-3962.

In July 1913, Surveyor Ashdown H. Green and Indian Agent W.R. Robertson made declarations to the Royal Commission on the character of the land in the Cowichan Agency. The declarations were compiled and presented as Exhibit A48 in the evidence.<sup>26</sup> The following was recorded about the Qualicum Reserve:

197 acres. Deduct 7 acres for river and 6 for public road, leaving a balance of 184 acres. 20 acres are cultivated, with houses and gardens, and good bearing orchards of apples, pears and plums. There are 90 acres of good land. The land east of the road has been put under cultivation, but was found however to be somewhat sandy and not suitable for crops.

When the official four-volume report of the Royal Commission was published in 1916, it was stated in the table of statistics that the thirteen acres were deducted from the reserve for "rights-of-way."<sup>27</sup> No mention is made of a deduction "for river."

On 24 July 1913, the Royal Commission on Indian Affairs for the Province of British Columbia passed the following Minute of Decision confirming the Qualicum Reserve:<sup>28</sup>

COWICHAN AGENCY - QUALICUM TRIBE

ORDERED: That Qualicum Reserve of the Qualicum Tribe, described in the Official Schedule of Indian Reserves, 1913, be confirmed as now fixed and determined and shown on the Official Plan of Survey, viz.:  
"Qualicum, 197.00 acres."

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- 26 Copy on file at the National Archives of Canada, RG10, Volume 11023, File 637A. Microfilm T-3961.
- 27 British Columbia. Report of the Royal Commission on Indian Affairs for the Province of British Columbia. Victoria: Acme Press, 1916. See also copy on file at the National Archives of Canada, RG10, Volume 1044. Microfilm T-1461.
- 28 British Columbia. Report of the Royal Commission on Indian Affairs for the Province of British Columbia, p. 301.

Although no documentation could be found at this time concerning any commercial use of the Big Qualicum River, a plan was contemplated in 1927 to use part of the river to transport logs. On 12 March 1927, Horace Johnson of Nanaimo wrote Indian Agent A.H. Lomas the following letter:<sup>29</sup>

I hereby make application for a right-of-way to haul poles through the Indian Reserve on the bank of the Big Qualicum River and to dump said poles in the river.

I would make use of present skid road through the reserve so will not damage the property in any way.

I will pay a rental of \$10.00 per month and enclose cheque for \$30.00 as three months rent in advance.

Lomas forwarded Johnson's application to John McLean, Secretary of the Department of Indian Affairs, Ottawa. McLean replied to Lomas on 13 April 1927, giving permission for this enterprise. However, on 15 July 1927, Lomas informed McLean that Horace Johnson had gone bankrupt and the plan was dropped.

From 1933 to the 1950s, the Qualicum Band permitted logs to be boomed at the mouth of the river. According to records, various logging companies were permitted this privilege by the Indians.<sup>30</sup> There is no indication that the river was ever used to transport logs.

An interesting sidelight to Horace Johnson's proposed enterprise was the revelation of the composition of the Qualicum Band in 1927. When Lomas forwarded Johnson's application to John McLean, the Indian Agent wrote:

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<sup>29</sup> Correspondence concerning this project is on file at the National Archives of Canada, RG 10, Volume 8067, File 974/31-4-18-1(1). Microfilm C-9648.

<sup>30</sup> See the Reserve General Register, "Qualicum Indian Reserve," Indian Land Registry, DIAND, Ottawa.

I enclose herewith cheque [for \$30 from Johnson] in favor of the Receiver General, together with vouchers, No. 457 in favor of Indian, Annie Thomas, and No. 458 in favor of Indian, Mary Mahoy for \$15.00, and would ask that the Department approve of the application, and that cheques be forwarded in care of this office, in their favor. These two women are the only members of the Qualicum Band and are very aged.

In September 1935, Surveyor H.C. Mann drew up a map titled "Plan Showing Roads in Qualicum Indian Reserve, Newcastle Land District". The map indicates three roads on reserve property, totalling 8.86 acres. Only one of the roads crosses the length of the reserve, passing over the Big Qualicum River. This road is labelled "Island Highway" on the plan, also known today as Highway 19. The length of the highway through the reserve, according to the plan, is 4,423 feet. The plan states that this does not include 200 feet of river bed. The plan was approved by G.P. Hapier, Assistant Chief Engineer, Department of Public Works, Victoria, on 22 February, 1939.<sup>31</sup>

Meanwhile, on 29 July 1938, the Government of British Columbia passed Order in Council 1036 conveying Indian reserves outside the Railway Belt and the Peace River Block to the federal Government. This transfer conveyed 1,219 reserves to Crown Canada in trust, for the use and benefit of British Columbia Indians. The Qualicum Reserve was among those transferred. The reserve was described thus in the provincial Order in Council: "Newcastle District, at the mouth of the Qualicum River." No mention was made of "both sides" of the Big Qualicum River, as had been in the 1876 Minute of Decision of the Indian Reserve Commission and the 1913 Minute of Decision of the Royal Commission. The Order in Council reported the reserve acreage at 197.

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<sup>31</sup> Copy of the plan of file under RD 2791 at the Surveys and Mapping Branch, Legal Surveys Division, Energy, Mines and Resources Canada, Ottawa.

Today, the Big Qualicum River is most noted for its Pacific salmon and steelhead trout enhancement program, the first of such modern programs undertaken in British Columbia by the Department of Fisheries and Oceans. The project is operated through the Salmonid Enhancement Program, using a number of artificial and natural enhancement techniques to increase the river's fish population. The project's success is based on its ability to both control the flow of water from Horne Lake, and to control the temperature of water in the Big Qualicum below the lake by allowing water from three different levels of the lake to escape into the river bed channel.

The roots of this project date to at least 1931. On 14 February of that year, Department of Fisheries official H.H.M. Beadnell reported from Comox, B.C.:<sup>32</sup>

On Thursday evening, the 12th inst. I met Mr. J. McHugh near Bowser, when he arrived by stage from Nanaimo. On Friday, the 13th inst. I accompanied Mr. McHugh to Horne lake when we followed the Big Qualicum river (which is the outlet of the lake) to the Falls, which he thoroughly inspected with a view to finding out whether it would be possible and advisable to have fishways constructed in order that salmon might reach Horne lake from the sea. On the following day Mr. McHugh left for Vancouver.

No fishways were constructed and the idea appears to have been discarded for the time being. Then, in 1956, a B.C. Game Association biologist drew up a plan proposing the building of a flow-control dam in the narrow canyon of the Big Qualicum, at the outlet of Horne Lake. The Department of Fisheries rejected the idea at the time, but revived the plan in 1959. In that year, a geological study of the proposed dam-site was conducted for the

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<sup>32</sup> Copy on file at the National Archives of Canada, RG 23, Volume 835, File 719-9-71(1).

Department.<sup>33</sup> This was followed that same year by an engineering study that recommended a horseshoe tunnel be constructed, about 1,750 feet long extending from a point about seventy feet below the normal level of the lake to the north bank of the Big Qualicum River at the foot of the second falls. An earth-fill dam across the river channel was also proposed for flood control.<sup>34</sup>

The Department of Fisheries also conducted, in 1959, a biological survey that reported the Big Qualicum River was a major producer of Pacific salmon. The Department estimated spawning escapement for the period 1950-1958 inclusive were 1,000 chinook, 3,500 coho, 35,000 chum and 300 pink salmon.<sup>35</sup>

In 1960, property clearances along the Big Qualicum River were negotiated, including a small portion of the Qualicum Indian Reserve. As well, Hunts Creek, which was subject to flash floods, was diverted through a two and one half mile long open cut channel to enter the Big Qualicum near its mouth, within the Indian reserve.

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<sup>33</sup> John G. Fyles, "Geology of the Horne Lake Dam Site, Vancouver Island, British Columbia." Copy on file at the National Archives of Canada, RG 23, Volume 835, File 719-9-71(1).

<sup>34</sup> Crippen Wright Engineering Ltd., "Report on Flow Regulation of Big Qualicum River."

<sup>35</sup> Department of Fisheries, Big Qualicum River Biological Survey, 1959-60. Vancouver: January 1961. Copy on file at the National Archives of Canada, RG 23, Volume 837, File 719-9-71(14). See also Department of Fisheries statistics, now on file at the National Archives of Canada, RG 23, Volume 555, File 60.

The Big Qualicum River Salmon Development Project, as it became known, was completed in 1963.<sup>36</sup> The result of this phase of the project is that the entire outflow of Horne Lake can be controlled. During the spawning season, from August to mid-December, a constant flow is maintained. During the critical period of late summer and early fall, when natural water temperature often rise and thus endanger spawning, the temperature of the Big Qualicum River below the dam can be reduced as much as ten degrees through the use of the low-level intake.<sup>37</sup>

Following the completion of the flow-control dam, two spawning channels and a hatchery facility were added to the system. The channels were built between 1964 and 1967, and the hatchery program was begun in 1968. According to the Salmonid Enhancement Program Annual Report for 1983, the Big Qualicum River project contributes 150,000 chum, 100,000 coho and 90,000 spring salmon to the sport and commercial fishery, and more than 70,000 fish to the Indian Food Fishery.<sup>38</sup>

### CONCLUSION

Based on historical documentation found to date, it would appear that the Big Qualicum River was not used for commercial or transportation purposes by either Indians or white settlers. Although one individual in 1927 considered using a small portion

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<sup>36</sup> Correspondence dealing with the construction of the project is on file at the National Archives of Canada, RG 23, Volumes 835 to 840, File 719-9-71.

<sup>37</sup> See "River with a built-in miracle," Beautiful British Columbia (Fall 1966): 30-33.

<sup>38</sup> Canada, Fisheries and Oceans, and British Columbia, Ministry of Environment, Salmonid Enhancement Program Annual Report 1983. Vancouver: (1983), p. 73-74.



of the river to transport poles, the scheme was abandoned when the individual went bankrupt. No historical documentation was found indicating the river was ever consistently used as a transportation route. However, for this report, Fishery Officer John A. Macdonald of Qualicum Beach was asked in a memorandum, dated 10 December 1986, to report on the navigability of the Big Qualicum. He replied:<sup>39</sup>

Scott Trent, Guardian, reports that he has been able to take an outboard-powered inflatable (prop drive) to a point about 100 metres about the highway 19 bridge at high tide. Above that point the river could be considered navigable by canoe or rubber raft to the Big Qualicum Hatchery counting fence which is situated about 100 metres upstream of the south boundary of the Qualicum Indian Reserve.

To the best of my knowledge, the river is not used for recreational or other boating or canoeing above the highway bridge. Residents of the Qualicum Indian Reserve occasionally moor small boats to the river bank below the bridge which is also below the high tide mark.

The Qualicum Indian Reserve, at the mouth of the Big Qualicum River, was created by the Indian Reserve Commission in 1876. The Minute of Decision reads that the reserve is "to include both sides of the river at the mouth." From a letter written by Joint Commissioner Gilbert Sproat seven days after the reserve was created, it is evident that both sides of the river were given by the Indian Reserve Commission to the Qualicum Band because of the "small prairie" on both banks. The land was given to encourage the Indians in agricultural pursuits for, according to Sproat, "the smallness of the river, which though an excellent trout stream and frequented by salmon, cannot afford any large supply of the latter fish." The reserve that was created was 197 acres.

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<sup>39</sup> John A. Macdonald to J.E. Broome, Assistant District Supervisor, Nanaimo, B.C., 14 January 1987. Copy on file at Department of Fisheries and Oceans, Ottawa.

In 1913, the Royal Commission on Indian Affairs for the Province of British Columbia passed a Minute of Decision re-affirming the Qualicum Reserve. In 1938, the Qualicum Reserve was included among those reserves transferred to Crown Canada by the British Columbia Government under Order in Council 1036.

Since the 1960s, the Big Qualicum River, from Horne Lake to the south boundary of the Qualicum Indian Reserve, has been used by the Department of Fisheries and Oceans for a highly successful fish enhancement project. As part of this project, a flow-control dam was built at the canyon where Horne Lake empties into the Big Qualicum, eliminating the flash floods that occurred prior to this period. In 1968, construction began on a fish hatchery just outside the south boundary of the Qualicum Indian Reserve.

September 1988



