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# PORT SIMPSON LANDS TAKEN

UNION OF B.C. INDIAN CHIEFS

In 1916 the McKenna-McBride Commission cut-off over 11,000 acres of land from 4 reserves of Port Simpson Band.

The McKenna-McBride Commission was set up in 1912 by the Federal and Provincial governments. Its job was to review the size and location of Indian Reserves. The McKenna-McBride Commission had power to make cut-offs only if the Indians agreed or consented.

In September 1915 the McKenna-McBride Commission met with the Port Simpson Band. No consent was given to any cut-offs. The McKenna-McBride Commission did not even mention the possibility of cut-offs. Port Simpson Band took a strong position towards the McKenna-McBride Commission. Band spokesmen gave no consent to any cut-offs.

A strong protest that Port Simpson Band made in 1915 was about the general land question; the claim for Native Title. Band spokesmen stated that the reserve system had been imposed on the Tsimshian. They said that the general land question had to be settled first, then discussion on the size and location of reserves could start.

However the McKenna-McBride Commission had no power to settle the Native Title question. The Province refused to face the Indian land claim and kept the McKenna-McBride Commission from dealing with it.

Port Simpson strongly objected to this situation. Band spokesmen, Chief Joseph, said:

*"We are sorry that we expected to go more fully into the Land Question with the Commission thinking that they had power to deal with the larger land question, but seeing that they are not empowered to do so it would be useless...to say any more..."*

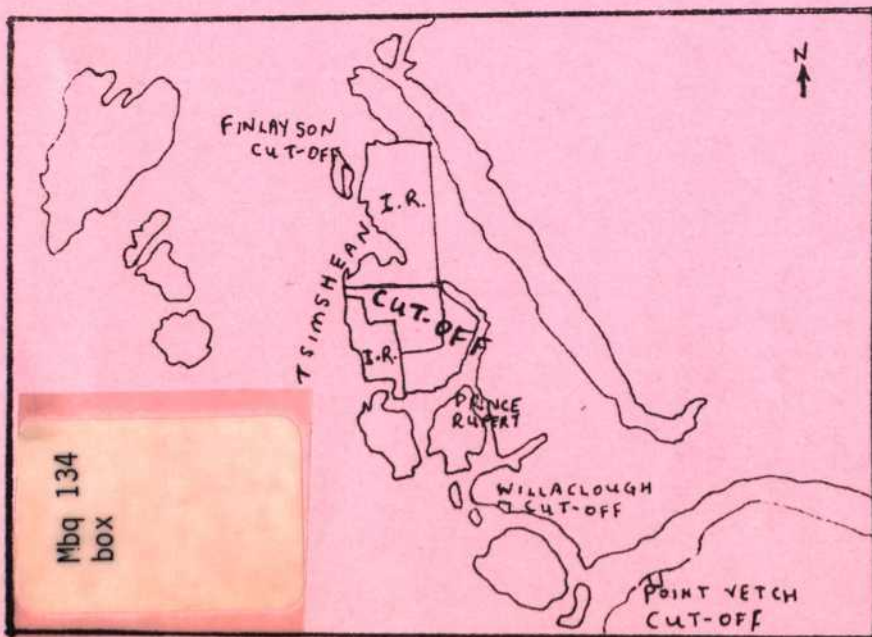
The Band also protested discrimination against Indians in the fishing industry and the loss of lands taken by the Province without compensation.

After this Band spokesmen refused to answer the question of the Commissioners, restating their stand for Native Title. The meeting broke up with the Chairman of the Commission threatening the Band:

*"If the members of this Tribe later on discover that some of the other Tribes have fared better than they themselves at the hands of the Commission, they will have only themselves to blame for not having answered our questions..."*

This was one promise that the Commission kept. For in 1916 it was ordered that the cut-offs of 11,000 acres from Port Simpson reserves be made. This was clearly against the powers of the Commission and the position of the Band.

## CUT - OFF



# TODAY'S SITUATION

Union of B.C. Indian Chiefs

The 23 Bands with McKenna-McBride cut-offs have formed an Action Committee to push for a just settlement of this issue. The Committee seeks negotiations with both the Federal and Provincial governments. The Federal government has recently said it is ready and willing to come to a settlement.

The Action Committee calls upon the Provincial government to enter into negotiations. The McKenna-McBride Commission was a joint Federal-Provincial Commission. The Province was involved at every step of the Commission's work and approval, including the cut-offs. Today the Province has control over the cut-off lands. The Province has a legal, moral, and political responsibility to come to a just solution of this grievance.

The Committee calls for a land freeze on cut-offs and for the Province to recognize its responsibility to deal justly with Indians.

The Committee's position for settlement is: return of cut-off lands where possible or alternate lands of equal worth.

The Bands are willing to talk and the Federal Government is willing to talk. How about the Province?

## What are the Port Simpson Cut-Offs?

1. Tsimpshian No. 2 10,468 acres cut-off. This is the main reserve of the Tsimpshian Nation and contained merchantable timber.
2. Willaclough No. 6 29 acre reserve cut-off entirely. This was used as a fishing station.
3. Point Vetch No. 7 16 acre reserve cut-off entirely. This was used as a fishing station.
4. Finlayson Island No. 19 1179 acres cut-off, leaving 410 acres. This was occupied and had gardens and several fishing camps. It was excellent timber and had quartz deposits.

