

OUR STORY

Confederated Tribes and Bands of the Yakama Nation



A Sovereign Nation

The Yakama Nation is a sovereign Native nation, whose self-governing authority predates contact and the formation of the United States. Indian tribes have always held the right to govern themselves, a truth explicitly acknowledged by Article I of the U.S. Constitution. It is crucial to understand that Tribal sovereignty is not a grant from the United States; it is an inherent right that has existed since time immemorial.

A Treaty Tribe

The Treaty with the Yakamas, signed June 9, 1855 (12 Stat. 951), unified 14 independent tribes and bands – the Yakama, Palouse, Pisquouse, Wenatshapam, Klikatat, Klin-quit, Kow-was-say-see, Li-ay-was, Skin-pah, Whish-ham, Shyiks, Oche-chotes, Kah-milt-pah, and Se-ap-cat – into a single, sovereign Native nation. The Treaty's enduring legacy includes the government-to-government relationship that shapes the present-day interactions between the Yakama Nation and the United States.

Treaty Territory

The Treaty of 1855 defines the Yakama Nation's reserved rights within its vast 12-million-acre Treaty Territory. Within this territory, Article II of the Treaty established a 1.4-million-acre Reservation – lands for the Yakama Nation's exclusive use and benefit. Article I and Article III of the Treaty further reserved perpetual rights of access, use, and other benefits from the broader ceded area.



This expansive ceded territory stretches from the North Cascade Mountains down to the Columbia River, and from the crest of the Cascades east to the Snake River. The Yakama Nation exercises jurisdiction over this entire Treaty Territory.



Tribal Government:

Public Services, Community Relations & Public Investments

The Yakama Nation's day-to-day governance is entrusted to its 14-member Tribal Council. These Elected Officials oversee the essential public services provided to the Yakama Nation's 11,000 members, including vital areas such as healthcare, education, and public safety. What makes the Yakama Nation's governmental responsibilities unique are the services dedicated to:



Preserving the past through cultural resource management.



Safeguarding the future through natural resource stewardship.



Upholding the Treaty rights that enable the Yakama People to exercise their customs and traditions.

Community relations are paramount to the Yakama Nation's governance. The Yakama Nation actively collaborates with other governmental bodies across Washington State, including the state government, various counties, municipalities, and school districts, alongside other community partners. Beyond inter-governmental cooperation, the Yakama Nation makes significant and regular investments in local communities through charitable initiatives, infrastructure improvement projects, and by providing employment to over three thousand individuals.