

SOCIAL STUDIES GRADE 5

OKANAGAN LAND CLAIMS



11255 Okanagan Centre Rd. W.
Lake Country, BC V4V 2J7



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BIG IDEA: CANADA'S POLICIES AND TREATMENT OF MINORITY PEOPLES HAVE NEGATIVE AND POSITIVE LEGACIES.

COMPETENCY: TAKE STAKEHOLDERS' PERSPECTIVES ON ISSUES, DEVELOPMENTS, OR EVENTS BY MAKING INFERENCES ABOUT THEIR BELIEFS, VALUES, AND MOTIVATIONS (PERSPECTIVE):

CONTENT: PAST DISCRIMINATORY GOVERNMENT POLICIES AND ACTIONS. SAMPLE TOPIC: TREATIES WITH FIRST PEOPLES



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ACTIVITIES TO CREATE INQUIRY:

- 1.OVERVIEW
- 2.ACTIVITY: MAPPING LAKE COUNTRY
- 3.ACTIVITY: LAND CLAIM DISPUTES

LESSON PLAN CREATED USING LAKE COUNTRY MUSEUM & ARCHIVES ARCHIVAL RESOURCES, LAND CLAIM INFORMATION FROM LOCAL NEWSPAPER, AND MAPS FROM OKIB AND DON MCNAIR

WHAT WILL WE KNOW: WHAT LAND CLAIMS IMPACT THE AREA OF LAKE COUNTRY.

FURTHER INQUIRY:
FIELD TRIP SUGGESTIONS:
1.LAKE COUNTRY MUSEUM
AND ARCHIVES



We respectfully acknowledge that the land on which the Lake Country Museum is situated, where this lesson was developed, is on the unceded territory of the Syilx (Okanagan) Peoples.

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Social Studies Grade 5: The impact of land claims in Lake Country

Learning Experience
Students will watch a video and learn about what land claims impact the area they live in. Students will be able to discuss how Canada's policies and treatment of minority peoples have negative and positive legacies.

Lesson plan created using Lake Country Museum & Archives archival resources, land claim information from local newspaper, and maps from OKIB and Don McNair

Intention	Students will learn about the history of Canada's past with discrimination and the effects it caused. Further, students will be able to think critically about the lasting implications it may have caused, or if there are any current events they can draw from.
Objective	The objective of this lesson is to help bring awareness to Canada's multiculturalism and to gain insight on the past.
The story	<p>Many European settlers were arriving in the Okanagan valley. Before any European arrived, the Syilx nation was present in the area. To both groups, it was important to provide a place to pasture their livestock. Meaning, they needed a place to keep their livestock fed. Between Okanagan Lake and Wood/Kalamalka Lake, there was a large stretch of land that was perceived as underutilized by settlers. That land was turned into what they called "The Commonage."</p> <p>Before we continue, Commonage is a combination of two words. "Common" and "Pasturage." Meaning that this area was a common pasture for everyone to use.</p> <p>In 1877, The BC Commissioners passed a decision to establish Commonage in the Lake Country area, among other reserves for the Indigenous peoples. The Commonage was reserved for winter grazing by the cattle of both the Syilx people and the European settlers. No system for policing the cattle grazing on the Commonage was established.</p>

	<p>In 1889, a new agreement was reached within British Columbia's Chief Commissioner of Land and Works and the Indian Reserve Commissioner. The new agreement stated that the BC government would take over the Commonage and in return it would establish an Indian Reserve on the west side of Okanagan Lake. This meant that the land was no longer available for the Syilx people to use. The problem was, in the conversations that made this decision, only the European Settlers were represented, not the Syilx people.</p> <p>After, the government had the Commonage surveyed and divided into quarter sections. They then put those up for sale, which attracted a variety of farmers and business people to develop and use the land how they saw fit. This became very different from the shared land it used to be.</p> <p>No agreement was ever made with the Syilx nation to change the usage of the Commonage. All the decisions were made without their consent. Just over a hundred years after the change, in 1989, OKIB Chief Murray Alexis brought a land claim for the Commonage Reserve to the attention of the B.C. Supreme Court. The OKIB has laid claim to 22kms of rail line that runs through the Commonage, saying that there was never a right to build railway in this area because of the existing land claim. In 2008 the land claim was denied by the government due to the claim that there is no "lawful obligation" for the company to return the land.</p> <p>This is one example of why we call the Okanagan area the unceded territory of the Syilx Nation. Because the land was taken away from the Syilx people, without any kind of agreement or discussion. When it comes to working with people and making agreements, this is why communication and respect between all the people involved is so important, especially involving people's possessions.</p>
Suggested discussion questions	<p>Discussion Questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● What are land claims? Why are they important to bring forward? ● Did the government have the right to give away the land of the Commonage without the Syilx peoples' consent? ● Who should the Commonage belong to today?
Historical Context	The Commonage

<p>(For teacher background)</p>	<p>The word 'Commonage' was derived from the contraction of 'Common' and 'Pasturage', meaning common pasturage. This creates "... a large tract of land set aside for grazing purposes".</p> <p>Many white settlers were arriving in the Okanagan Valley. It was important to provide both the settlers and the Syilx Okanagan people, the First Peoples of Lake Country, a place to pasture their livestock. The Commonage area was, at that time, the vacant land available in the area. The area of the land planned for the Commonage was 25,114 acres. On the west side, it followed Okanagan Lake North towards Vernon from Okagan Centre. ON the East side, it followed Long Lake (now known as wood and Kalamalka lakes) from Okanagan Centre to Vernon. Today, the land close to Predator Ridge is the best for orienting this section of the Commonage. There is also a small portion on the West side of Okanagan Lake near the Head of the Lake.</p> <p>On May 8, 1876 an agreement was made that the Commonage was to be reserved from pre-emption, for grazing by the Syilx people and the settlers for pastureland. This agreement was signed by Indian Reserve Commissioner, A. C. Anderson; Dominion Commissioner, Archibald McKinley, Commissioner for British Columbia; and Joint Commissioner, G. M. Sproat.</p> <p>However, in 1889, a new agreement was reached between British Columbia's Chief Commissioner of Land and Works, P. O'Reilly and the Indian Reserve Commissioner. The new agreement stated that the provincial government would take over the Commonage and in return, it would establish an Indian Reserve on the West Side of Okanagan Lake.</p> <p>In 1893, the government had the land on the Commonage surveyed into quarter sections which were then put up for sale. This land attracted speculators, developers and farmers to locations near Okanagan Lake. Small farming communities developed on the Commonage, including Sunnywold (Carr's Landing) and Oyama.</p> <p>Okanagan Indian Band Chief Murray Alexis of the Syilx Nation first brought the land claim for the Commonage lands forward in 1989. The land claim for title to the Commonage has yet to be</p>
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	<p>resolved and opposing records between Indigenous peoples and the BC government maintain conflicting evidence about the land.</p> <p>(Excerpt from <i>Lake Country: Origins in Time and Place</i>)</p>
Keywords	<p>Pre-emption: A plot of land the settler could claim before the land was surveyed.</p> <p>Land claim: A legal declaration by a First Nations band or government of desired control over areas of land. In Canada, land claims fall into two broad categories: comprehensive, known as modern treaties, and specific, which make claims based on pre-existing treaties, agreements, or reserves.</p>
Additional Information	<p>For more information and historical timeline visit: https://www.lakecountrymuseum.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/03/Northern-Okanagan-Commonage.pdf</p> <p>For more information on the land claims in the area, see these two newspaper articles.</p> <p>History of the Okanagan Commonage Reserve iNFOnews Thompson-Okanagan's News Source</p> <p>Rail corridor in doubt as Okanagan Indian Band takes land claim to court iNFOnews Thompson-Okanagan's News Source</p>
Activities	<p>Activity 1: Mapping Give students the handout below. Print off the two maps of Lake Country – we recommend double siding and giving them to students in plastic sleeve protectors so they can be reused.</p> <p>Ask the students to use the two maps to follow the questions on the handout. For this assignment, students are mapping the area of the Commonage land claim as well as how the land was divided up by early settlers here in the Okanagan.</p> <p>Optional follow up – lead students into a discussion about current geography. What names do they recognize? Why? What areas are still named after those ranchers today? This is an opportunity to look at lasting legacies and make positive connections to what students already know.</p> <p>Activity 2: Land claim disputes After the Okanagan Commonage Reserve spanning from Oyama to the Vernon Army Base was established by the Indian Reserve Commission in 1877, Premier William Smithe and Prime Minister Sir John A.</p>

	<p>MacDonald are alleged to have had secret meetings where they negotiated auctioning off the land to incoming settlers in 1893. In 1899, the Indian Reserve Commission established a new reserve on the Northwest side of Okanagan Lake.</p> <p>According to the Okanagan Indian Band, the reserve was removed by the government and the band was not consulted nor did they ever lawfully surrender the land.</p> <p>In 2015, CN Rail tried to sell the land, but the Band argues that it is not their land to sell.</p> <p>Have a class discussion:</p> <p>Where does the idea of fairness come into play? If the class agrees that this is unfair, why do they think it happened anyway? How does this make them feel about Canada's history (legacy)?</p> <p>If the roles were reversed, would the Indigenous peoples have been able to divide and sell the land without consulting the settlers?</p> <p>Or</p> <p>If the settler government had consulted with the Syilx, do you think the land would be different today?</p>
Further Inquiry	<p>Field Trip Suggestions:</p> <p>Lake Country Museum & Archives:</p> <p>The Lake Country Museum & Archives has many different displays that help to shape the narrative of the stories and history of the Okanagan. The museum's website also has many great resources and more stories that can help lend to many lessons.</p> <p>https://www.lakecountrymuseum.com/</p> <p>Teacher resource: Voices of the Land Site Guide Voices of the Land</p>

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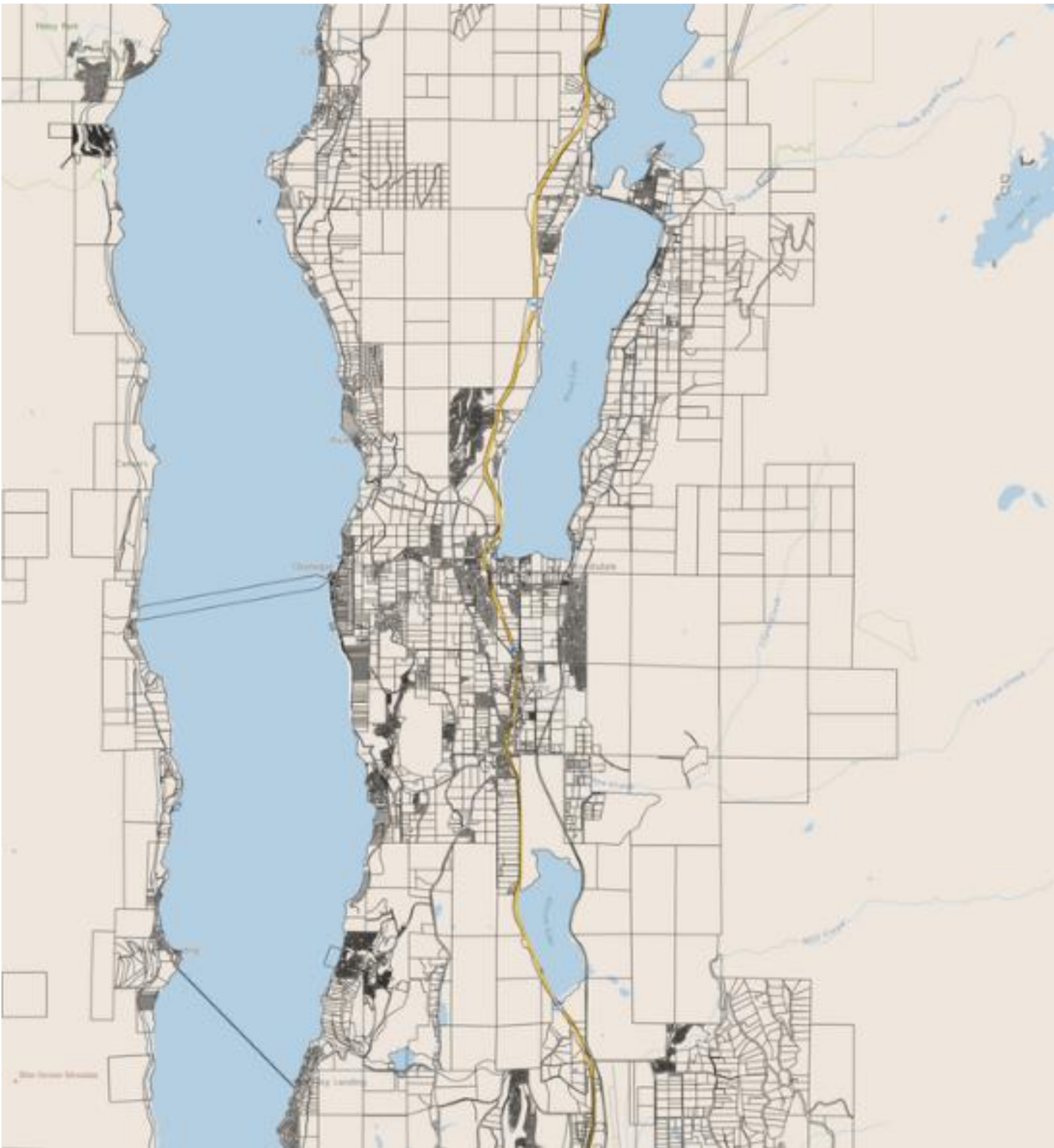
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Commonage Mapping Assignment

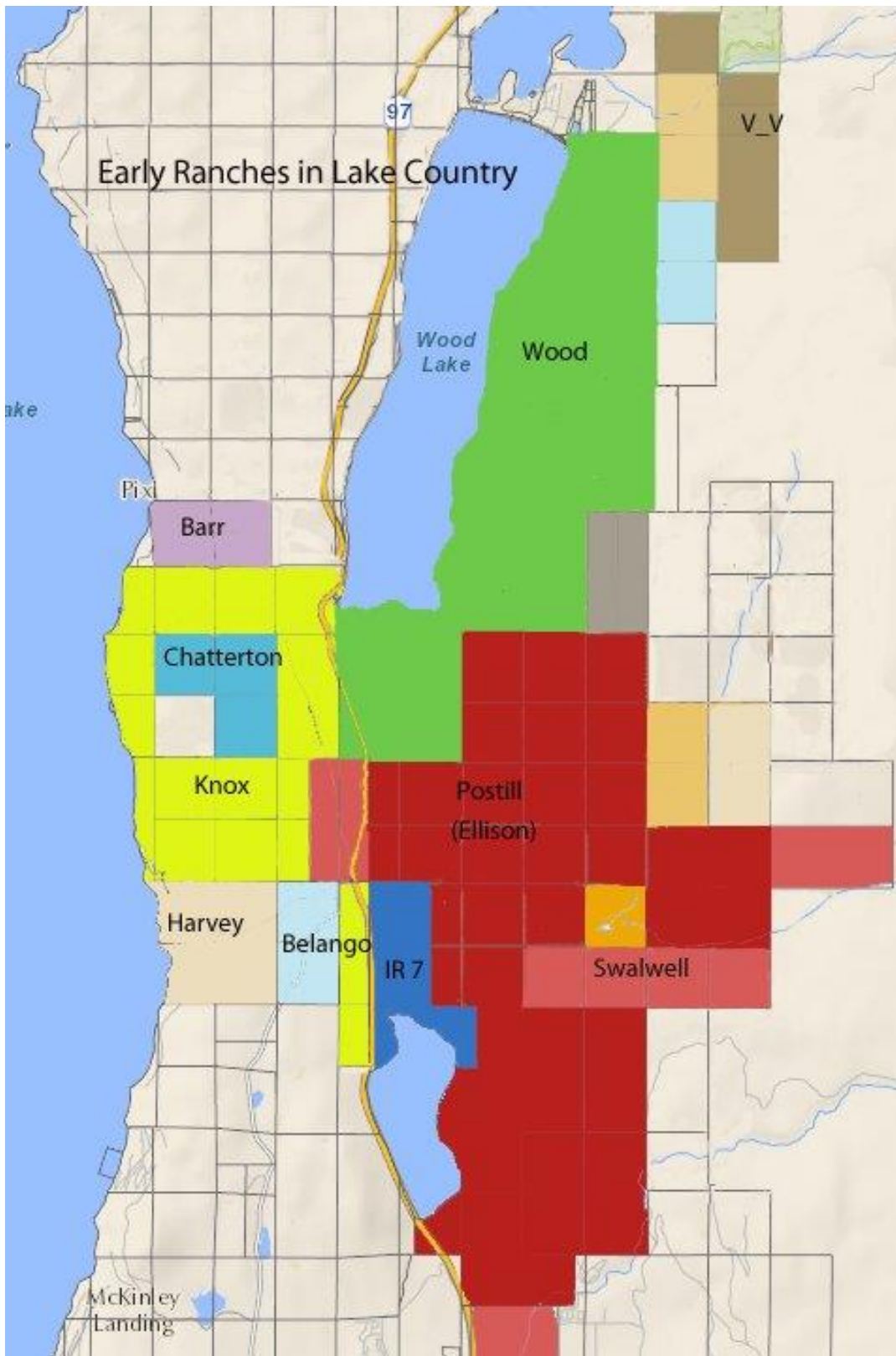
Instructions: Your maps need to include all of the following locations, use the checklist to guide you. You only need to include the bolded word on your map.

<p>Post 1877 Farmlands:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> Barr<input type="checkbox"/> Chatterton<input type="checkbox"/> Knox<input type="checkbox"/> Harvey<input type="checkbox"/> Belango<input type="checkbox"/> Wood<input type="checkbox"/> Postill (Ellison)<input type="checkbox"/> Swalwell <p>Natural Landmarks:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> <u>Wood Lake</u>	<p>Shade in the following area in yellow:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> What land was claimed in the original 1877 Land claim (TIP: Look for where wood lake is labelled on each map to help)
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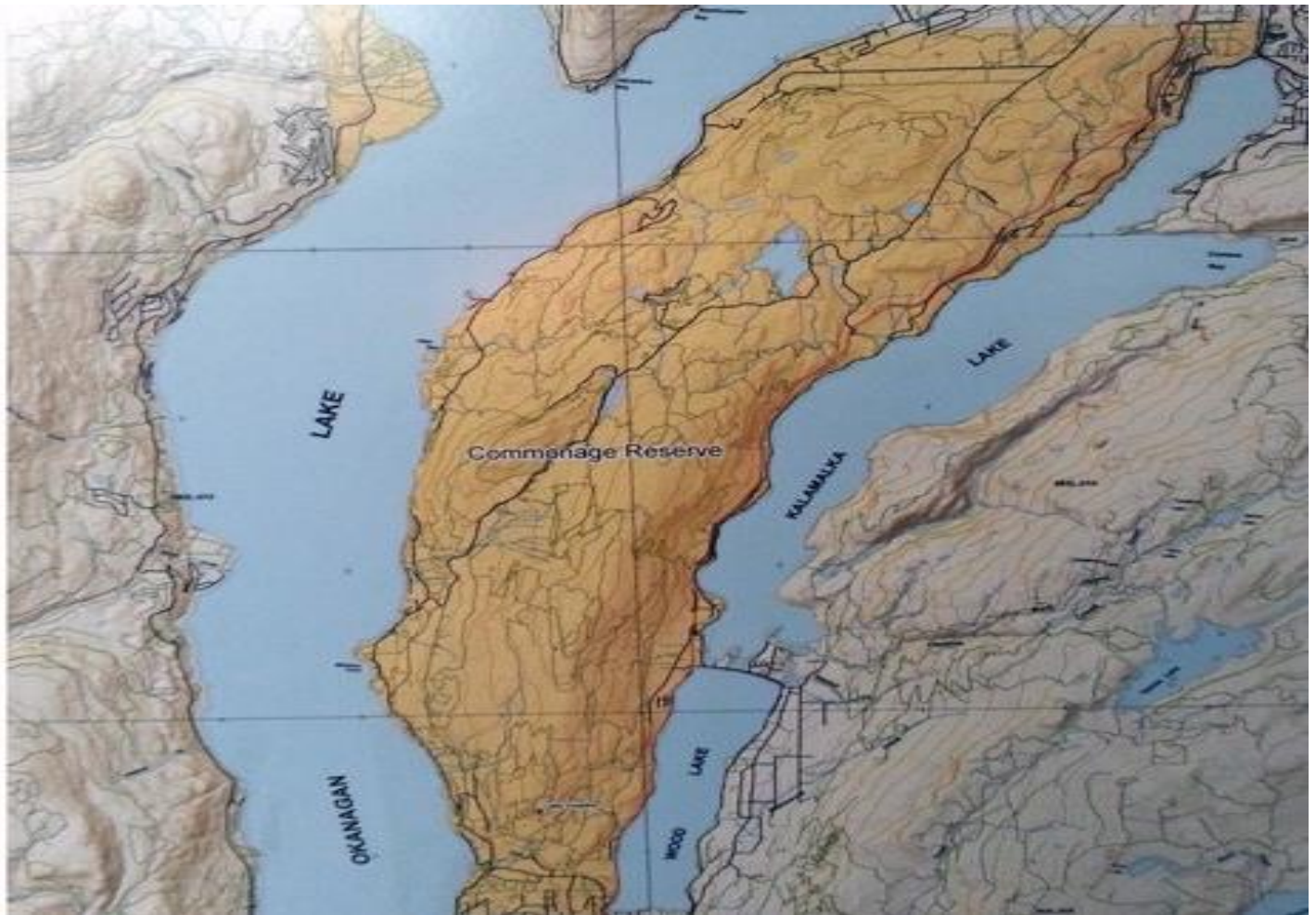
Map on back page:



Early Ranch Land Claims:



Commonage Land Claim:



Answer key

