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## **Religious, Tribal leaders to examine epic dam losses, Columbia River Treaty reform**

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*more conference information - [www.waterplanet.ws/ethics/treaty.html](http://www.waterplanet.ws/ethics/treaty.html)*

Tribal, First Nation, and religious leaders will gather at Gonzaga University on May 13 to discuss stewardship and the need to correct the historic wrongs of the Columbia River Treaty. The one day “[Ethics and the Columbia River Treaty: Righting Historic Wrongs](#)” conference will explore opportunities to modernize and improve the Columbia River Treaty, a 50-year-old agreement that governs management of the Columbia River and dams in both nations. Both Canada and the United States are presently determining whether to renegotiate the Columbia River Treaty.

“My hope for the Ethics and Treaty Conference is to invigorate a regional dialogue that will advance stewardship, justice, and mutual respect in any decisions impacting this international Columbia River,” said [Bishop William Skylstad](#), one of the 12 bishops who signed the [Columbia River Pastoral Letter](#). Bishop Skylstad will open the conference with a review of the Columbia River Pastoral Letter.

The conference will provide a forum for people throughout the Columbia Basin to examine and discuss their relationship with the river, and epic losses suffered due to dam building. The conference will highlight opportunities to modernize the Columbia River Treaty using principles of stewardship and justice to resolve international water conflicts and promote a water ethic.

“Tribes in the United States and First Nations in Canada suffered profound damage and loss from Columbia and Snake River Dams,” said [John Sirois of the Colville Confederated Tribes](#). “Modernizing the Columbia River Treaty is a critical opportunity for Canada and the United States to join together in acknowledging damage done, right historic wrongs, and commit to stewardship of this great river in the face of climate change.”

The U.S. State Department is expected to announce the United States’ negotiating position on the Columbia River Treaty later in 2014. Federal agencies have

recommended that the United States and Canada "develop a modernized framework for the Treaty that ensures a more resilient and healthy ecosystem-based function throughout the Columbia River Basin while maintaining an acceptable level of flood risk and assuring reliable and economic hydropower benefits." All four Northwest states, 15 Columbia Basin tribes, fishermen and environmentalists support that recommendation.

In March, British Columbia released its draft recommendation that the Treaty be renewed and that changes occur within the existing framework. The B.C. Province holds that ecosystem values are currently and should continue to be an important consideration, as well as adaptation to climate change, in Treaty planning and implementation. The federal government in Ottawa has not yet announced Canada's position.

The conference is hosted by Gonzaga University's Political Science Department, Native American Studies, and Environmental Studies, will be held in Spokane on May 13, and is open to the public without charge. Participants need to RSVP by May 8, and should contact John Osborn [john@waterplanet.ws](mailto:john@waterplanet.ws) 509.939-1290

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