**Okanogan Highlands**

**Physical Features**

Larger than several states, the land of the Okanogan Highlands is divided into two geographic regions, the east and the west, by the Columbia River. The highlands are characterized by rounded mountains with forests, including the Colville and Kaniksu National Forests, and deep, narrow valleys. There are several rivers and lakes. The Okanogan Highlands region was formed by three main forces; uplifting caused by plate tectonics, glaciers from the last Ice Age, and erosion from wind, rain, rivers, and oceans.

**Climate and Natural Resources** 

The Okanogan Highlands is partially in the rain shadow of the Cascade Mountains, which means that precipitation varies within the region. Precipitation is mostly snow, with up to 40 inches annually in the western section. Summers are mild to hot, and winters are colder on the plateau, where temperatures can fall to below zero degrees Fahrenheit. The land of the Okanogan Highlands has many natural resources, including timber, ranch land, farm land, and minerals such as gold and silver. The eastern portion of the Okanogan Highlands contains the oldest sedimentary and metamorphic rocks in the state. This region offers a variety of waterways rich with fish. 

**Industry**

The rich natural resources of the Okanogan Highlands allow for a variety of industries including logging, mining, ranching, hydroelectricity and agriculture. Outdoor recreation and tourism are popular, especially dude ranches. Okanogan County has become a major cross-country skiing and snowmobiling center. The western Okanogan Highlands is an important mineral-producing area. The center of gold mining is the Republic District. By January 1, 1989, the district had produced more than 2.5 million ounces of gold and 14 million ounces of silver.

**Native American Tribes** 

The Native American peoples of the Okanogan Highlands included a number of different bands who made their living mostly from rivers. They would travel around the region depending on the season and where food was available. The tribes moved to the rivers for fish runs, the mountain meadows for berries and deer, and the plateau for roots. Lewis and Clark met members of many of these bands. At a later period, they were well known to fur traders, who canoed past their rush-mat villages on their way to and from the mouth of the Columbia River. Okanogan, Spokane, and Colville tribes are a few of the Native American tribes who lived in the Okanogan Highlands.



**Major Cities and Landmarks**

The major rivers in the Okanogan Highlands are the Columbia River, Okanogan River, Sanpoil River, Kettle River, Pend Oreille River, and Spokane River. The major lake of this region is Roosevelt Lake. Omak is the largest town in the Okanogan Highlands. The Colville Indian Reservation covers 2,116.802 square miles in land area and is home to both Colville tribal members and their families and other non-Colville members, living either in small communities or in rural settings.

