
NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release
2014ARR0013-000840
June 19, 2014

Ministry of Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation
Stó:lō – People of the River Referrals Office

Agreement streamlines consultation in Fraser Valley

CHILLIWACK – A multi-year strategic engagement agreement (SEA) with 14 Stó:lō First Nations will enhance effective consultation and engagement on land and resource management decisions in the Fraser Valley.

The three-year agreement builds on a successful 24-month pilot in which the First Nations and the Province worked together to negotiate and implement a framework agreement to improve relations between the parties. The new agreement will continue to create more effective procedures for administering applications and referrals for the First Nations, government and industry.

The B.C. government is providing a total of \$2.1 million over the life of the agreement, which encompasses Stó:lō territory.

The agreement follows the pilot model with a government-to-government forum to oversee implementation. Provincial agencies processing land and resource applications will continue to work closely with the People of the River Referrals Office (PRRO), which acts as a single point of contact to ensure applications are referred to the appropriate signatory First Nation within agreed timelines. The B.C. government, the First Nations and industry benefit from this consultation process.

The provincial government recognizes that the area covered by the SEA hosts a number of major projects, and the agreement includes specific processes on referrals related to major projects.

SEAs with First Nations are intended to encourage a positive and respectful government-to-government relationship; strengthen B.C.'s investment climate and establish mutually agreed-upon procedures for consultation and accommodation. For First Nations who chose to enter the treaty process, SEAs can help to build the mechanisms to support decision-making in a post-treaty environment.

The 14 Stó:lō First Nation members participating in the pilot are Chawathil First Nation, Cheam First Nation, Leq'á:mel First Nation, Scowlitz First Nation, Shxw'ow'hamel First Nation, Skawahlook First Nation, Sumas First Nation and the Ts'elxwéyeqw Tribe, which signed on behalf of the Aitchelitz Band, Shxwhá:y Village, Skowkale First Nation, Soowahlie First Nation, Squiala First Nation, Tzeachten First Nation and Yakweakwisoose First Nation.

The provincial government has reached 31 economic benefit agreements with First Nations since the BC Jobs Plan was launched in 2011, and 13 of the 10 new non-treaty agreements B.C. committed to reaching over the next two years. These agreements support economic opportunities for both First Nations and neighbouring communities.

Quotes:

John Rustad, Minister of Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation –

“I firmly believe that working in partnership is the best way to ensure meaningful participation in resource management for First Nations. I am delighted to see all the hard work from the pilot project grow into this significant multi-year agreement.”

Otis Jasper, Chairperson, Stó:lō First Nations Strategic Engagement Agreement Board –

“Our Stó:lō leadership is firmly supportive of our SEA. This agreement establishes a framework for engaging with the Province on a government-to-government level regarding land and resources uses within our tribal lands. Our lands and resources are vitally important to our culture and economy. Developing a pilot two years ago and now a full-scale SEA speaks to the commitment of our combined leadership as Stó:lō from our multiple tribes to work together with the province on matters that are of great importance to all of our communities.”

Quick Facts:

- The \$2.1 million funding for the Stó:lō SEA breaks down to \$700,000 per year for the signatory First Nations.
- B.C. now has eight fully operating SEAs with First Nations, including the Stó:lō First Nations, Tahltan Nation, Kaska Dena, Taku River Tlingit First Nation, Nanwakolas Council Society, Ktunaxa Nation, Tsilhqot'in Nation and the Secwepemc Reconciliation Agreement. Entering into SEAs with First Nations is one of many tools being used by government. For those First Nations who chose to also enter the treaty process, SEAs can help to build the mechanisms to support decision-making in a post treaty environment.
- SEAs provide an opportunity to take a more active role in the decision-making process and develop a stronger government-to-government relationship with the B.C. government.

Media Contacts:

Robin Platts
Communications Manager
Ministry of Aboriginal Relations and
Reconciliation
250 387-1204

Dr David Schaepe
General Manager, People of the River Referral
Office
604 819-1467
Dave.schaepe@stolonation.bc.ca

Connect with the Province of B.C. at: www.gov.bc.ca/connect