



Sta'ailes, B.C. Cement Relationship with Innovative Agreement

[Sts'ailes] On November 1, 2011 Sts'ailes (Chehalis Indian Band) and the Province of B.C. signed a historic Memorandum of Understanding at Sts'ailes Lhawathet Lalem (Healing House).

For over a year, the Province and Sts'ailes have been working together to establish a new and creative approach for managing the land and natural resources in Sts'ailes *Xa'xa Temexw* (sacred earth). The resulting Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) is designed to create greater certainty over the land and resources through open communication, shared decision making, and mutual respect and recognition.

Through this process we have defined many areas in which we will collaboratively work towards common goals. Sts'ailes is an independent, progressive FN looking to build an effective government to government relationship with British Columbia. This MOU is a huge step forward, and offers a framework that could be applied across the province.

One of the things that makes the MOU unique is the broad group of signatories from provincial government agencies. The MOU is signed by managers from the Ministries of Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation, Transportation and Infrastructure, Forests, Lands and Natural Resources Operations and Children and Family Development.

The Sts'ailes have lived in the Harrison Watershed continually from time-immemorial, and have inherited rights and responsibilities to the land, water, and resources. The Sts'ailes' close physical, spiritual, and cultural connections with their *Xa'xa Temexw* provide them with the unique ability and responsibility to take care of all living things for the health and well being of *Xa'xa Temexw*.

Chief William Charlie is quick to point out that these responsibilities have traditionally come with the authority to control and manage the land and resources for Sts'ailes' benefit. "We think that the Province's acknowledgement of our territory, and of our role as stewards of the resources, will go a long way towards reconciling our interests."

This MOU has started a process whereby the Sts'ailes can continue to exercise their rights, but also work alongside the Province, businesses, and their aboriginal and non-aboriginal neighbours. Chief William Charlie, who was the lead negotiator for the Sts'ailes, was clear throughout the process that this MOU should provide "certainty for us, certainty for the Province, and certainty for businesses wishing to work in our territory—and all through a streamlined process."



“The MOU creates a strategy for collaboration that will allow the Sts’ailes to take advantage of economic opportunities in the Fraser Valley, while providing more certainty over the use of land and natural resources,” said Mary Polak, Minister of Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation. “Chief Charlie has long demonstrated his commitment to addressing the health, social and economic needs of his community. I commend the negotiators from both Sts’ailes and the Province for taking this innovative approach.”

This MOU includes diverse initiatives such as forestry opportunities, road trespass, land exchanges, hydroelectric projects, tourism, conservation, coordinated consultation, child and family services, and health care—all of which form the basis for future Government to Government agreements. According to Chief Charlie “Sts’ailes Chief and Council has created a long range vision for the people of Sts’ailes that will not only contribute to the health, well being and prosperity of our people and land but will be mutually beneficial to our neighbours.”

To view a copy of the MOU visit

<http://www.stsailes.com/>

http://www.newrelationship.gov.bc.ca/agreements_and_leg/other.html

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