



S'ólh Lets'emó:t – Our One Thought

Stó:lō Xwexwilmexw Shxwelméxwelh (Constitution)

Overview



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Stó:lō Xwexwilmexw
Treaty Association



WHAT IS A CONSTITUTION?

“Our rules of conduct, our rules of behavior, the way that we think, our moral values... are actually situated around the Stó:lō Nation. They not only define our Nation but they define how we are supposed to conduct ourselves. Our Constitution has always been here and it really is written in stone.”

*Xwelíqweltel
Grand Chief Steven Point*



Xéylxelamós (Lady Franklin Rock) is one of many transformer sites in S'ólh Téméxw that embody our s'í:wes.

Shxwelméxwelh means our Stó:lō way and is our word for constitution. Picture our Constitution as the posts of a longhouse that our six communities are building together.

Our Constitution:

- Describes who we are, what is important to us, and how our s'í:wes (teachings) will inform our own government.



S'ólh Lets'emó:t – Our One Thought represents our treaty in a visual way (see image on back cover). The longhouse represents our Constitution. Art by Jared Deck, Ch'iyáqtel.

- Is the highest Stó:lō Xwexwilmexw law.
- Can grow and change as our nation changes.
- Was created by SXTA Leadership after years of public input and is being brought back to members for further input.

WHY DO WE NEED ONE?

S'ólh témexw te íkw'elò. Xólhmet te mekw'stám ít kwelát. This is our land. We have to take care of everything that belongs to us.

A Stó:lō guiding principle

Our Constitution:

- Guides us in taking control of our own destiny.
- Describes how we can make our own rules based on our culture and traditions, which ensure we take care of the land, water, and air for our tomíyeqw (future generations).
- Provides an alternative to the colonizing powers of the Indian Act, which we will no longer live under.

HALQ'EMÉYLEM

Halq'eméylem provides a deeper connection and way of understanding our language, culture and Shxwelméxwelh.

The Stó:lō Xwexwilmexw Shxwelméxwelh (Constitution)

WHO WE ARE

- Áthelets/Aitchelitz
- Leq'á:mel/Lakahamen
- Sq'ewá:lxw/Skawahlook
- Sq'ewqéyl/Skowkale
- Ch'iyáqtel/Tzeachten
- Yeqwyeqwí:ws/Yakweakwioose



Our villages are joining together – in our own way and according to our own laws – to become Stó:lō Xwexwilmexw.

PROTECTING OUR RIGHTS

As Stó:lō Xwexwilmexw, we have guaranteed rights. Our Constitution protects our rights, our lands, and our interests for present and future generations.

CITIZENSHIP

Our National Government and the Village Governments will define citizenship together. Villages will maintain control over their own membership codes.

HONOURING OUR S'Í:WES (TEACHINGS)

"They asked us to sell our lands, and our people could not make sense of the idea of selling their ancestors. The women bury their afterbirth in the land and it creates a connection. It is a fundamental part of the Stó:lō worldview."

Xwelíqweltel
Grand Chief Steven Point

We are creating a Constitution based on our teachings, which continue to evolve. These include:

- We come from the earth and we return to the earth.
- We are guided by our ancestors and elders.
- We keep our traditions alive in the longhouse.
- Our relationship to the land is sacred and our land will never be for sale.
- We will govern in the best interests of future generations.

STÓ:LŌ XWEXWILMEXW HÍKW LÁLÉM (GOVERNMENT)

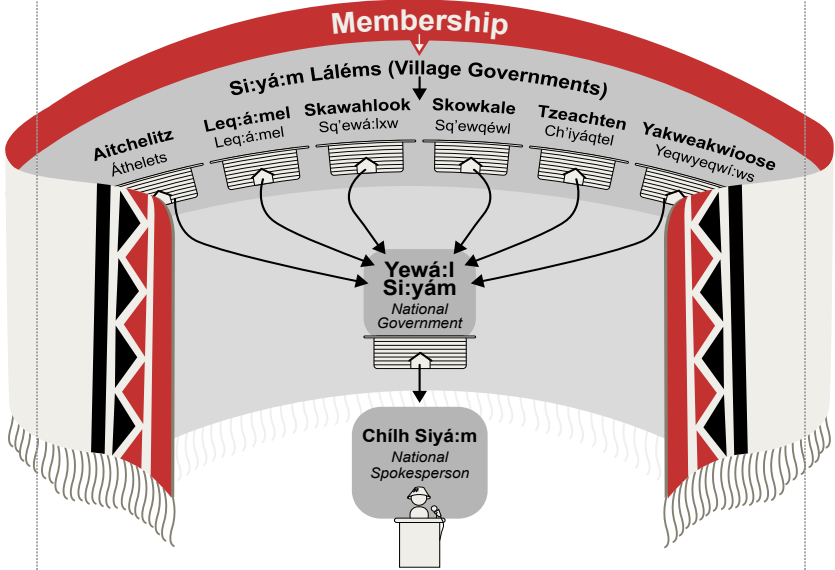
Minimal change going in, with maximum opportunity for us to make the changes we want in the future. This means that authorities and services currently delivered by your Village Council, WILL continue, and may be enhanced under the new SX Government."

Siyémches
Chief Terry Horne

Key concepts in our Constitution include:

- Power is held by the Stó:lō people and entrusted to our Si:yám (either hereditary or elected chiefs).
- The division of powers between the Village and National governments is set out in our Shxwelméxwelh.
- We will not give up any of our rights and nothing will happen on our land without our consent.

STÓ:LŌ XWEXWILMEXW HÍKW LÁLÉM (GOVERNMENT)



Our government consists of three decision-making bodies:

- 1 **Si:yám Lálém (Village Governments)** – Village leaders are chosen according to each Village's laws and these governments will make decisions and laws on local matters.
- 2 **Yewá:l Si:yám Lálém (National Government)** – Our new National Government will be made up of one appointed leader from each Village Government and will make laws on topics of national concern, such as justice, health, land and resources, education and more.

- 3 **Átéálém (Justice Council)** – Our Justice Council is independent and will create a way for Stó:lō Xwexwilmexw to solve our own problems, in our own way, according to our own laws.

Advisory bodies may provide advice to the National Government. Current advisory bodies include:

- 1 **Sí:yólexwe Lálém (Elders Council)** – Each Village will select one Elder from among their members to serve on the council.
- 2 **Si:yó:melh Lálém (Grand Chiefs Council)** – Grand Chief is an honorary appointment given to long-serving political leaders. They will provide advice on political matters.
- 3 **Xwelmexwó:llh Lálém (Youth Council)** – Our Youth Council is made up of representatives, between 14 and 21 years of age, from each Village.

CHÍLH SIYÁ:M (NATIONAL SPOKESPERSON)

The National Spokesperson is the political leader and voice of the Stó:lō Xwexwilmexw and is selected at least every four years by the members of the National Government.

ÁTELÉQ (OMBUDSPERSON)

The Ombudsperson is an independent officer who receives, investigates and responds to citizens' written complaints. These issues must be related to actions of government that directly impact the person with the complaint.

Take the self-guided Treaty Tour today!
www.sxta.bc.ca/treatytour

FOR MORE INFORMATION The Stó:lō Xwexwilmexw Shxwelméxwelh (Constitution) Overview is a guide to our Constitution. For a full copy, contact outreach@sxta.bc.ca, 604 824 3281 or visit sxta.bc.ca/Constitution.