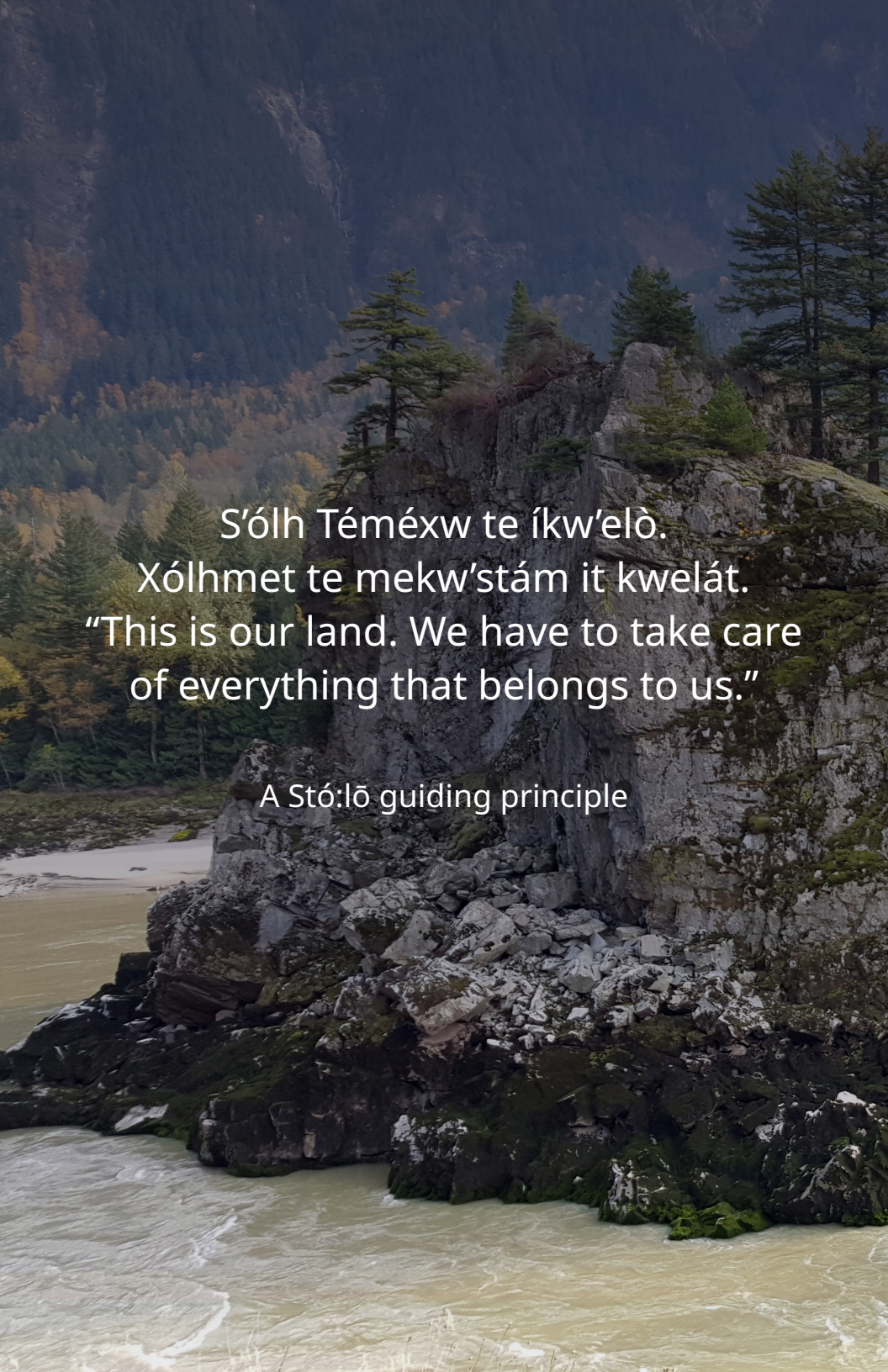




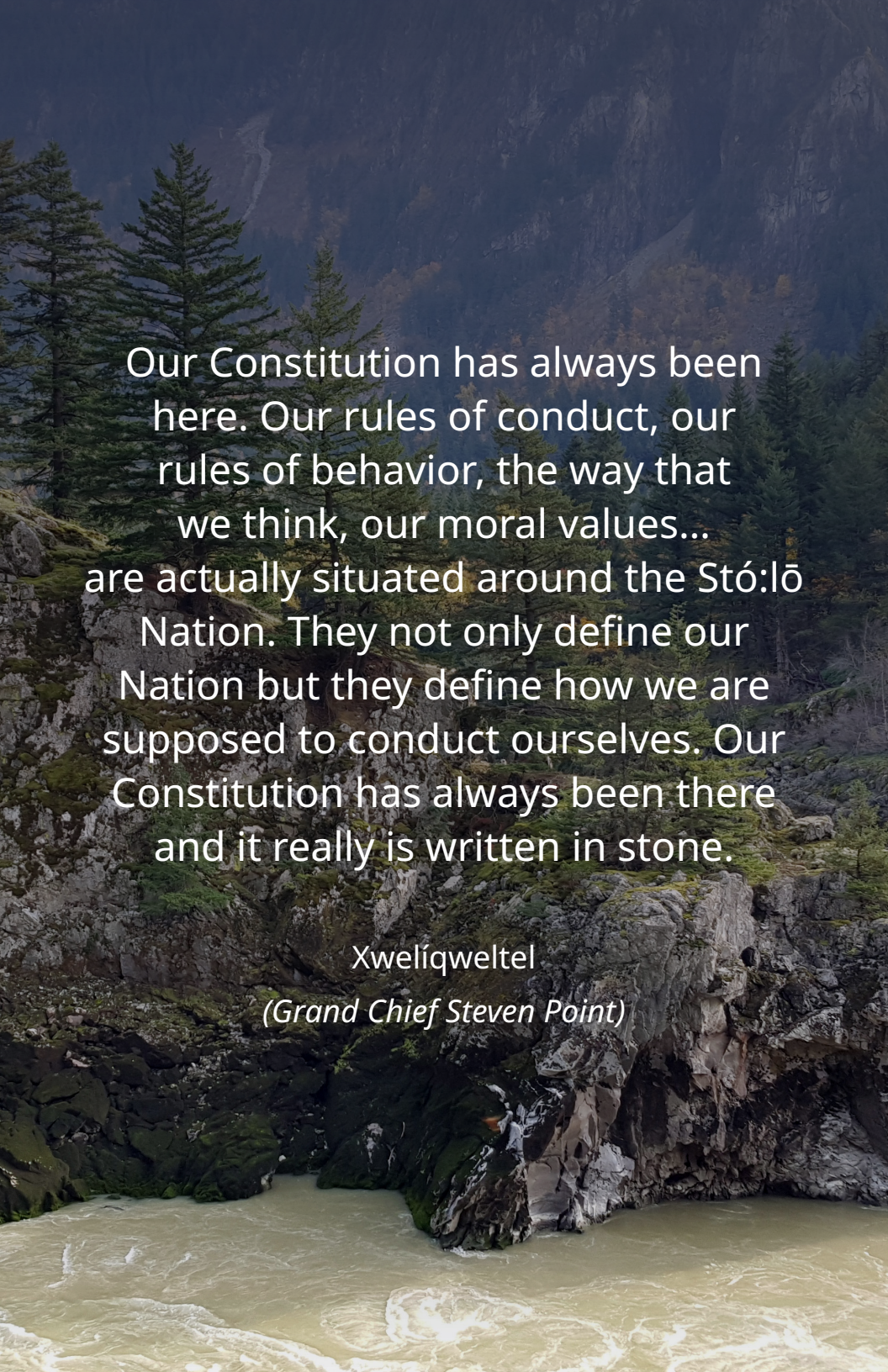
# **Stó:lō Xwexwilmexw Shxwelméxwelh**

**(Stó:lō People's Constitution)**



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

A Stó:lō guiding principle

A scenic view of a river flowing through a rocky canyon. The river is a milky, yellowish-brown color, likely due to sediment. The banks are composed of dark, jagged rocks and are covered with patches of green moss and small evergreen trees. In the background, a steep, dark mountain rises, its face partially covered in forest. The overall atmosphere is rugged and natural.

Our Constitution has always been here. 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 there and it really is written in stone.

Xwelíqweltel

*(Grand Chief Steven Point)*

# 1. Lets'e (One): Stó:lō Xwexwilmexw (Stó:lō People) Shxwelméxwelh (Constitution)

- 1.1 Six Stó:lō Villages – Áthelets (*Aitchelitz*), Leq'á:mel, Sq'ewá:lxw (*Skawahlook*), Sq'ewqéyl (*Skowkale*), Ch'iyáqtel (*Tzeachten*), and Yeqwyeqwi:ws (*Yakweakwioose*) – have come together to form the Stó:lō Xwexwilmexw (*Stó:lō People*) and to establish a common government. Each of these Stó:lō Villages is a unique and valued part of the Stó:lō Xwexwilmexw (*Stó:lō People*).
- 1.2 We are Stó:lō and Xwexwilmexw, the people of the river and the land that holds our ancestors. This Shxwelméxwelh (*Constitution*) only applies to the Stó:lō Xwexwilmexw (*Stó:lō People*).
- 1.3 As Stó:lō we are born with the inherent right of self-determination and self-government, Aboriginal rights, title and interests. This Shxwelméxwelh is how the Stó:lō Xwexwilmexw (*Stó:lō People*) will exercise our self-government.

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(Stó:lō People's Constitution)

## 2. Isá:le (Two): S'í:wes (Teachings)

- 2.1 This Shxwelméxwelh (*Constitution*) is xáxa (*sacred*).
- 2.2 Our teachings are called s'í:wes (*teachings*) and shall be used to interpret this Shxwelméxwelh (*Constitution*).
- 2.3 We are also people of the xwelmxwáwtxw (*longhouse*) guided by our s'í:wes (*teachings*).
- 2.4 Our s'í:wes (*teachings*) endure and evolve over time.
- 2.5 We follow in the footsteps of our ancestors and acknowledge our síyólexwe (*elders*) by keeping our traditions alive.
- 2.6 Our relationship to the land is that we come from Mother Earth and we return to Mother Earth. Our Aboriginal title, rights and interests will never be for sale; we cannot and will never sell our ancestors.
- 2.7 Our Si:yá:m (*respected leaders*) have the obligation to protect and fairly govern the Stó:lō Xwexwilmexw (*Stó:lō People*) and S'ólh Témexw (*Our Land*) according to this Shxwelméxwelh (*Constitution*).
- 2.8 Our Si:yá:m (*respected leaders*) have always and shall continue to make decisions guided by our s'í:wes (*teachings*) and in consideration of our tómiyeqw (*seven generations past and future*).

### 3. Ihí:xw (*Three*): Stó:lō Xwexwilmexw Híkw Lálém (*Government*)

3.1 The Stó:lō Xwexwilmexw Híkw Lálém (*Government*) consists of the following:

3.1.1 Si:yá:m Lálém (*Village Governments*)

3.1.2 Yewá:l Si:yá:m Lálém (*National Government*)

3.1.3 Átéłálém (*Justice Council*)

3.1.4 Advisory bodies, including:

3.1.4.1 Sí:yólexwe Lálém (*Elders Council*)

3.1.4.2 Si:yó:melh Lálém (*Grand Chiefs Council*)

3.1.4.3 Xwexwilmexwó:llh Lálém (*Youth Council*)

3.2 The purpose of the Stó:lō Xwexwilmexw Híkw Lálém (*Government*) will:

3.2.1 act in the best interests of the Stó:lō Xwexwilmexw (*Stó:lō People*),

3.2.2 respect all laws including Stó:lō Xwexwilmexw (*Stó:lō People's*) Laws.

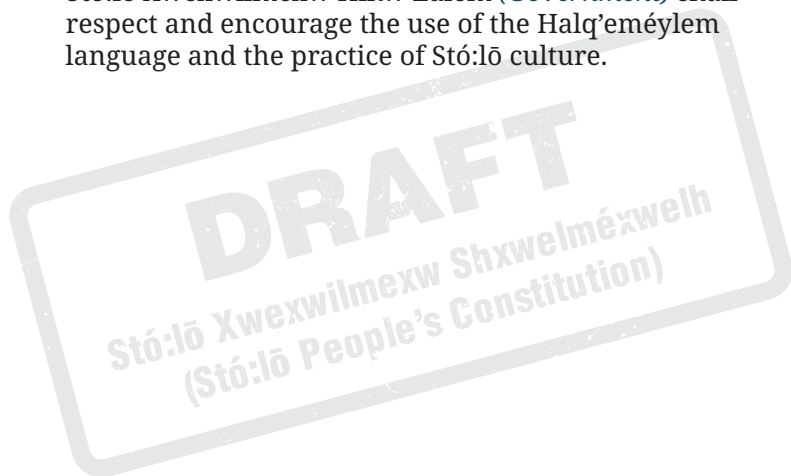
3.2.3 will preserve and protect for all Stó:lō Xwexwilmexw (*Stó:lō People*) today and for xwelmi:ay stá:xwelh (*future generations*) for as long as the land shall last, the following:

3.2.3.1 our Stó:lō inherent, Aboriginal and Treaty rights, title, and interests; and

3.2.3.2 the Stó:lō Xwexwilmexw (*Stó:lō People's*) way of life including our culture, language, heritage, lands, economy, and resources.

3.2.4 shall be ólhet (*respectful*), fair, accountable, and transparent.

- 3.2.5 shall not directly or indirectly cede, release, surrender or extinguish any inherent, Aboriginal or Treaty right or title of the Stó:lō Xwexwilmexw (*Stó:lō People*).
- 3.2.6 shall take care of all Stó:lō Xwexwilmexw (*Stó:lō People's*) Lands for xwelmi:ay stá:xwelh (*future generations*).
- 3.3 Every member of the Stó:lō Xwexwilmexw Híkw Lálém (*Government*) must conduct themselves in an honourable and ethical manner in accordance with our s'í:wes (*teachings*).
- 3.4 The official languages are Halq'eméylem and English. The Stó:lō Xwexwilmexw Híkw Lálém (*Government*) shall respect and encourage the use of the Halq'eméylem language and the practice of Stó:lō culture.



## 4. Xe'ó:thel (*Four*): Si:yá:m Lálém (*Village Government*)

- 4.1 Each Stó:lō Xwexwilmexw (*Stó:lō People's*) Village shall be governed by a Si:yá:m Lálém (*Village Government*), the members of which shall be selected according to their own s'í:wes (*teachings*).
- 4.2 Each Si:yá:m Lálém (*Village Government*) shall govern according to its own sxwōxwiyá:m (*old history*) and sqwélqwel (*recent history*) in a manner that is consistent with this Shxwelméxwelh (*Constitution*).
- 4.3 Each Si:yá:m Lálém (*Village Government*) shall have authority to make laws of a local nature that are not otherwise granted to the Yewá:l Si:yá:m Lálém (*National Government*).
- 4.4 Each Si:yá:m Lálém (*Village Government*) may exercise the authorities, responsibilities and functions assigned to it by this Shxwelméxwelh (*Constitution*).

## 5. Lheq'á:tses (*Five*): Yewá:l Si:yá:m Lálém (*National Government*)

- 5.1 The Yewá:l Si:yá:m Lálém (*National Government*) is composed of one Siyá:m (*respected leader*) selected by each Si:yá:m Lálém (*Village Government*).
- 5.2 The Yewá:l Si:yá:m Lálém (*National Government*) shall:
  - 5.2.1 be the national government of Stó:lō Xwexwilmexw (*Stó:lō People*) and shall make decisions by enacting laws, regulations, resolutions and policies.
  - 5.2.2 have authority with respect to matters of a national concern including, but not limited to: fishing, child protection, education, justice, health, gaming, environmental protection, land, air, water,

resources, culture, heritage, emergency powers and intergovernmental relation; and

- 5.2.3 have the ability to establish Stó:lō Xwexwilmexw (*Stó:lō People*) public institutions.

## 6. T'xém (Six): Chílh Siyá:m (National Spokesperson)

- 6.1 The Chílh Siyá:m (*National Spokesperson*) will be selected at least every four years by the Yewá:l Si:yá:m Lálém (*National Government*), from its members, to act as the chair of the Yewá:l Si:yá:m Lálém (*National Government*), the political spokesperson of the Stó:lō Xwexwilmexw (*Stó:lō People*) and serve as the national leader.

## 7. Th'ó:kws (Seven): Átéálém (Justice Council)

- 7.1 The Yewá:l Si:yá:m Lálém (*National Government*) and Sí:yólexwe Lálém (*Elders Council*) shall each appoint one of its members to the Átéálém (*Justice Council*). Each member of the Átéálém (*Justice Council*) serves as long as they hold a seat in their Lálém (*Council*).
- 7.2 The Átéálém (*Justice Council*) shall establish and implement conflict resolution processes that promote harmony and facilitate the resolution of disputes, reviews, challenges and appeals.
- 7.3 After exhausting all internal processes, an appeal from the Átéálém (*Justice Council*) lies with the Provincial or Supreme Court of British Columbia, or the Human Rights Tribunal of British Columbia.

## 8. Tqá:tsa (*Eight*): Advisory Councils

- 8.1 The Sí:yólexwe Lálém (*Elders Council*), Si:yó:melh Lálém (*Grand Chiefs Council*) and Xwexwilmexwó:llh Lálém (*Youth Council*) are advisory bodies. The Si:yá:m Lálém (*Village Government*) may establish other permanent or temporary advisory councils at its discretion.
- 8.2 Sí:yólexwe Lálém (*Elders Council*):
- 8.2.1 The Sí:yólexwe (*elders*) are the holders of our s'í:wes (teachings), our sxwōxwiyám (*old history*) and our sqwélqwel (*recent history*).
  - 8.2.2 Every Si:yá:m Lálém (*Village Government*) shall select, from its members one Siyólexwe (*elder*) to serve on the Sí:yólexwe Lálém (*Elders Council*).
  - 8.2.3 The Sí:yólexwe Lálém (*Elders Council*) shall advise the Stó:lō Xwexwilmexw Híkw Lálém (*Government*) on any matter so referred to the Sí:yólexwe Lálém (*Elders Council*).
- 8.3 Si:yó:melh Lálém (*Grand Chiefs Council*)
- 8.3.1 The Si:yó:melh Lálém (*Grand Chiefs Council*) is comprised of Stó:lō Xwexwilmexw Si:yó:melh (*Stó:lō People's Grand Chiefs*).
  - 8.3.2 A Stó:lō Xwexwilmexw Siyómelh (*Stó:lō People's Grand Chief*) is an honorary appointment by a Stó:lō Xwexwilmexw Si:yá:m Lálém (*Village Government*) for life.
  - 8.3.3 The Si:yó:melh Lálém (*Grand Chiefs Council*) will, on request, provide advice on political matters.

#### 8.4 Xwexwilmexwó:llh Lálém (*Youth Council*)

- 8.4.1 Each Si:yá:m Lálém (*Village Government*) shall select, from its members, one youth, 14-21 years of age, to sit on the Xwexwilmexwó:llh Lálém (*Youth Council*).
- 8.4.2 The Xwexwilmexwó:llh Lálém (*Youth Council*) shall select from its members a representative to attend meetings of the Yewá:l Si:yá:m Lálém (*National Government*) and the ÁtéLálém (*Justice Council*) as observers and advisors.



## 9. Tú:xw (Nine): Átéleq (Ombudsperson)

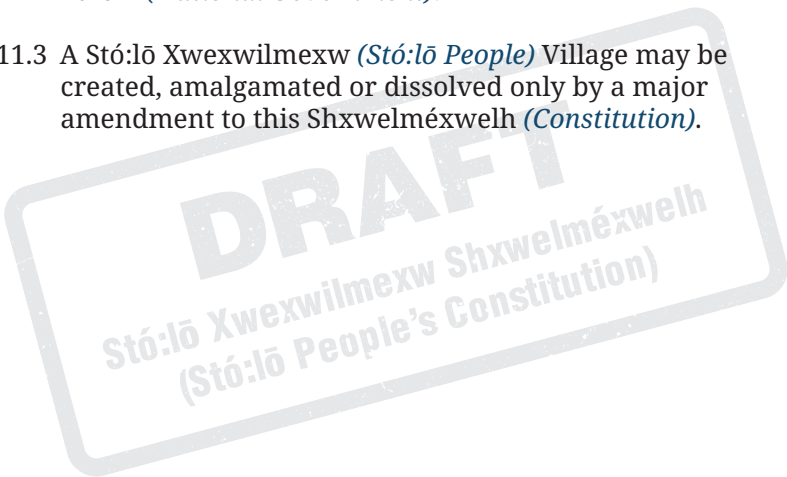
- 9.1 The office of Átéleq (*Ombudsperson*) is independent of the Stó:lō Xwexwilmexw Híkw Lálém (*Government*).
- 9.2 The Átéleq (*Ombudsperson*) shall be authorized to investigate and make recommendations, with respect to written complaints it receives from Stó:lō Xwexwilmexw (*Stó:lō People*) citizens about actions or inactions of the Stó:lō Xwexwilmexw Híkw Lálém (*Government*) that directly affect the complainant, within a timely manner.
- 9.3 The Átéleq (*Ombudsperson*) shall report as required to the Yewá:l Si:yá:m Lálém (*National Government*) and/or the Átelálém (*Justice Council*).

## 10. Ó:pel (Ten): Citizenship

- 10.1 All matters concerning Stó:lō Xwexwilmexw (*Stó:lō People*) citizenship including the definition of citizens are within the power of the Yewá:l Si:yá:m Lálém (*National Government*) and each Si:yá:m Lálém (*Village Government*) and shall be determined consistent with s'í:wes (*teachings*) and the Stó:lō Xwexwilmexw S'ólh Lets'emó:t (*Treaty*).

## 11. Ópel gas te léts'a (*Eleven*): Amendments

- 11.1 A major amendment to this Shxwelméxwelh (*Constitution*) shall be made by referendum where in each village a majority of a quorum of electors who are eligible to vote, vote in favour of the proposed amendment. A quorum is 51% of village citizens who are eligible to vote unless a Si:yá:m Lálém (*Village Government*) establishes an alternate quorum according to their customary law.
- 11.2 A minor amendment to this Shxwelméxwelh (*Constitution*) shall be made by a majority vote of the Yewá:l Si:yá:m Lálém (*National Government*).
- 11.3 A Stó:lō Xwexwilmexw (*Stó:lō People*) Village may be created, amalgamated or dissolved only by a major amendment to this Shxwelméxwelh (*Constitution*).



## Appendix A

In 1975 twenty-four Stó:lō Chiefs affirmed the Stó:lō Declaration, which stated the values and principles that informed the treaty negotiations and have led to this Constitution. It reads in part, as follows:

### **Stó:lō Declaration, 1975**

The Creator gave us laws that govern all our relationships to live in harmony with nature and mankind.

The laws of the Creator defined our rights and responsibilities. The Creator gave us our Spiritual Beliefs, our language, our culture, and a place on Mother Earth, which provided us with all our needs.

The people of the Stó:lō Tribes have held and still hold Aboriginal Title and Aboriginal Rights to all the land and resources within our Tribal Territory.

The people of the Stó:lō Tribes declare and affirm our inalienable right of Aboriginal Title and Aboriginal Rights of the land, the rivers, the streams, the sea, the air, and other resources of our land.

We declare that our Aboriginal Title and Aboriginal Rights have existed from time immemorial, exist at the present time and shall exist for all future time.

## Appendix B

The purpose of this appendix is to provide the minimum standards for each Village Shxwelméxwelh (*Constitution*).

### **{Insert name of Village} Shxwelméxwelh (*Constitution*)**

1. This is the Shxwelméxwelh (*Constitution*) of the \_\_\_\_\_ {insert name} Village.
2. The citizens of {insert name} shall select a Lálém (*Government*) from among its members.
3. The {insert name} Lálém (*Government*) shall select from its members one representative to the Yewá:l Si:yá:m Lálém (*National Government*).
4. The {insert name} Lálém (*Government*) shall have the authority to, among other things, manage all {insert name} lands, to conduct any business on behalf of the {name of Village} including borrowing funds, entering into contracts and the opening of bank accounts.
5. The {insert name} Lálém (*Government*) shall report to its members at least annually, all of its activities including financial activity for the past year.
6. The {insert name} Lálém (*Government*) shall have the authority to pass by simple majority any law pertaining to the good government and management of each Village.
7. A major amendment to this Shxwelméxwelh (*Constitution*) shall be made by referendum where in each village a majority of a quorum of electors who are eligible to vote, vote in favour of the proposed amendment. A quorum is 51% of village citizens who are eligible to vote unless a Si:yá:m Lálém (*Village Government*) establishes an alternate quorum according to their customary law.

# Appendix C: Definitions, Interpretation and Legal

## C:1 Halq'eméylem Definitions

- a) **ÁtéLálém** is the name given to the Justice Council. From **ate** meaning “right, in sense of exactly or just” and **lálém** (see below).
- b) **ÁtéLéq** is the name for the Ombudsperson. From **ate** (see above) and **eleq** meaning “one who does, as an occupation”.
- c) **Chílh Siyá:m** is the name for the National Spokesperson. From **chílh** meaning “high, upper, above” and **Siyá:m** (see below).
- d) **Híkw Lálém** – the name for the Government House. From **híkw** meaning “be big, be large, be high” and **lálém** (see below).
- e) **Lálém** is the name for the Councils of Government. From **lálém** meaning house.
- f) **Ólhet** means to be respectful or to respect someone.
- g) **Shxwelméxwelh** means Stó:lō way. It is the name of the Stó:lō Xwexwilmexw (*Stó:lō People's*) Constitution. A Constitution is a body of fundamental principles and rules according to which the Stó:lō Xwexwilmexw (*Stó:lō People*) is to be governed.
- h) **S'í:wes** means our teachings.
- i) **Siyá:m** means our respected leaders, chiefs. Also the name for the **Si:yá:m Lálém** (*Village Governments*). **Siyá:m** is singular; **Si:yá:m** is plural.
- j) **S'í:yólexwe** means our elders. **S'í:yólexwe** is singular.
- k) **S'í:yólexwe Lálém** is the name for the Elders Advisory Council.
- l) **Si:yó:melh Lálém** is the name for the Grand Chiefs Advisory Council. From **Si:yó:melh** meaning “belonging to a chief, in the style of a chief.”
- m) **S'ólh Lets'emó:t** means “our one thought” and is the name of the Stó:lō Xwexwilmexw Treaty.

- n) **S'ólh Téméxw** means “our traditional territory”. From **s'ólh** “ours, our” (emphatic) and **téméxw** “earth, ground, land, the earth, the world”.
- o) **S'ólh Téméxw te íkw'elò. Xólhmet te mekw'stám it kwelát.** “This is our land. We have to take care of everything that belongs to us.”
- p) **Stó:lō Xwexwilmexw (Stó:lō People) – Stó:lō** (“river” and “Fraser River” and Stó:lō people). Halq'eméylem speaking people living along the Fraser River or its tributaries from Five Mile Creek above Yale downriver to the mouth of the Fraser River. (see Xwélmexw definition below).
- q) **Sqwélqwel** means “recent history”. According to the late Rosaleen George and Elizabeth Herrling it also meant “family history”.
- r) **Sxexómes** means “our gifts”. From **sxómes** “a gift in memory from someone gone” and **Stó:lō shxweli**, “our gifts” which includes natural resources and ceremonies.
- s) **Sxwōxwiyám** means old history. From **xwiyám** “tell a story (legendary)”.
- t) **Tómiyeqw** means “great great great great grandparent, great great great great grandchild, sibling or cousin (up to fourth), or great great great great grandparent or child”.
- u) **Xáxa** means sacred.
- v) **Xwélmexw** – “Indian person, North American Indian.” From **xwel** “still” and **mexw** “person, people”. **Xwexwilmexw** is plural.
- w) **Xwelmexwáwtxw** means longhouse.
- x) **Xwexwelmexwó:llh Lálém** is the name of the Youth Advisory Council. From **xwexwelmexwó:llh** meaning “youth”.
- y) **Xwelmi:ay stá:xwelh** means future generations. From **xwelmi:ay** – **xwel** “still”, **mi** “come, coming, come to, coming to”, **á:y** “keep on going” and **stá:xwelh** “children, not necessarily one's own.”
- z) **Yewá:l Si:yá:m Lálém** is the name of the National Government. From **yewá:l** “first”, **Si:yá:m** “respected leaders” and **lálém** “house”.

## C:2 Interpretation

- a) Stó:lō Xwexwilmexw (*Stó:lō People's*) Laws shall be interpreted in a large, liberal and purposive manner.
- b) "major amendment" means an amendment that substantially changes the meaning of the clause sought to be amended.
- c) "minor amendment" means an amendment that is administrative in nature including spelling and punctuation errors.
- d) "Stó:lō Xwexwilmexw (*Stó:lō People's*) Laws" means all laws enacted by the Stó:lō Xwexwilmexw Híkw Lálém (*Government*) and includes this Shxwelméxwelh (*Constitution*) and all regulations enacted pursuant to Stó:lō Xwexwilmexw (*Stó:lō People's*) Laws.
- e) "Treaty" means the S'ólh Lets'emó:t (*Treaty*), the name of the Stó:lō Xwexwilmexw Treaty, which is a "treaty" within the meaning of s. 35 of the Constitution Act, 1982.
- f) The appendices are attached to and form part of this Shxwelméxwelh (*Constitution*).

**DRAFT**  
Stó:lō Xwexwilmexw Shxwelméxwelh  
(Stó:lō People's Constitution)

## C:3 Legal

- a) This Shxwelméxwelh (*Constitution*) is the highest law of the Stó:lō Xwexwilmexw (*Stó:lō People*). All Stó:lō Xwexwilmexw (*Stó:lō People's*) Laws, the application of such laws, and all policies, actions and decisions made by the Stó:lō Xwexwilmexw Híkw Lálém (*Government*) and its institutions, shall be consistent with this Shxwelméxwelh (*Constitution*), and if inconsistent, are of no force and effect to the extent of the inconsistency.
- b) On Effective Date of this Shxwelméxwelh (*Constitution*) the Si:yá:m Lálém (*Village Governments*), the Yewá:l Si:yá:m Lálém (*National Government*), the Átéłálém (*Justice Council*) and the office of Átéłéq (*Ombudsperson*) shall be established as legal entities and the Sí:yólexwe Lálém (*Elders Council*), Si:yó:melh Lálém (*Grand Chiefs Council*), Xwexwilmexwó:llh Lálém (*Youth Council*) shall be established as advisory bodies.
- c) This Shxwelméxwelh (*Constitution*) may be cited as the Stó:lō Xwexwilmexw Shxwelméxwelh (*Stó:lō People's Constitution*) Act, 20\_\_. It shall have the force of law in Canada and shall come into effect on the \_\_ day of \_\_\_\_, 20\_\_.
- d) The Stó:lō Xwexwilmexw Híkw Lálém (*Government*) is subject to the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.
- e) The Stó:lō Xwexwilmexw (*Stó:lō People*) held a referendum in each of the six Stó:lō Villages and on \_\_ day of \_\_\_\_, 20\_\_ approved this Shxwelméxwelh (*Constitution*).
- f) On Effective Date of this Shxwelméxwelh (*Constitution*), the Chief and Council of the six Stó:lō Xwexwilmexw Villages that are in office immediately before that date becomes the Si:yá:m Lálém (*Village Governments*) until replaced according to the laws and customs of their respective village.
- g) On Effective Date of this Shxwelméxwelh (*Constitution*), the directors of the Stó:lō Xwexwilmexw Treaty Association that are in office immediately before that date shall be the Yewá:l Si:yá:m Lálém (*National Government*) until replaced by their respective village Si:yá:m Lálém (*Village Government*).

A stylized, abstract graphic in shades of blue. It depicts a hand holding a feather, with the hand's fingers and the feather's barbs rendered in bold, flowing lines. The background is a solid dark blue, and the graphic elements are in lighter shades of blue, creating a layered, artistic effect.

## **Stó:lō Xwexwilmexw Treaty Association**

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