



S'ólh Lets'emó:t – Our One Thought



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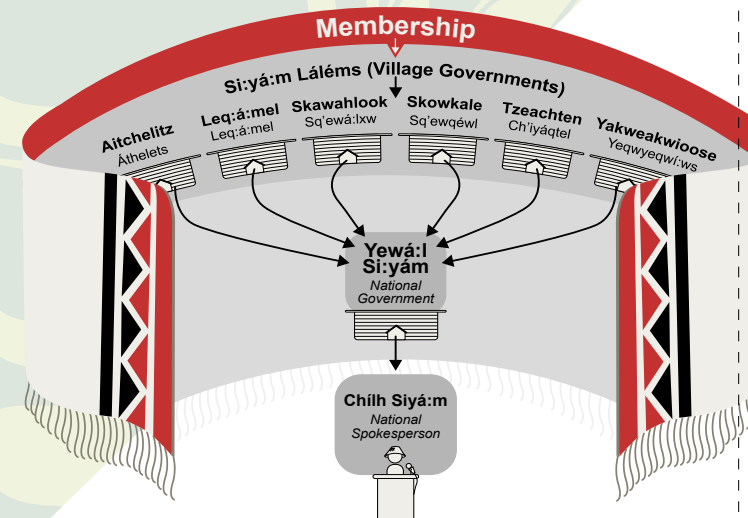


Stó:lō Xwexwilmexw
Treaty Association

What Does Stó:lō Xwexwilmexw Híkw Lálém (Government) Mean to Me?



STÓ:LŌ XWEXWILMEXW HÍKW LÁLÉM (GOVERNMENT)



"We need to show the world that we have the ability to govern ourselves and develop the institutions that are going to deliver services to our community members."

Skw'omkw'emexw Grand Chief Joe Hall

Creating a government is an essential part of our treaty process, said Grand Chief Joe Hall. Governance is the overarching structure in which we create policies and laws. Services and programs that our communities find meaningful are created based on these laws. Services currently delivered will continue and may be enhanced under our new Stó:lō Xwexwilmexw Híkw Lálém.



SELF-GOVERNMENT: OUR STÓ:LŌ WAY

"It's important to understand as you move forward in nation building that you are already a nation... And that your internal institutions and mechanisms for governance are already there. In many cases, you simply have to redefine them, rediscover them and implement them."

Xwelíqweltel, Grand Chief Steven Point

Our Shxwelméxwelh/Constitution lays out the division of powers between our National and Village Governments. If our Shxwelméxwelh/ Constitution is approved it will provide general guidelines for all our future laws (justice, education, environment, children and family legislation and more).

THE NEXT STEP after the Constitution vote is a Self-Government Agreement that will provide funds and enable our National Government to form in advance of a full Treaty that includes land and more cash and consistent funding.

WE DON'T HAVE ALL THE ANSWERS YET

We might make mistakes. If that happens, we will work together to fix them. The Nisga'a have been operating their own government, in their own way, since 2000. Their lawmakers state that they are just as happy with the number of laws they've written as the number of amendments they've made to correct any missteps. Governance is an ongoing process.



We have always had the right to govern ourselves and we will take our place as equals in government-to-government relationships in Canada.

INHERENT RIGHTS

Our rights have always existed, not because Canadian governments are finally beginning to recognize them, but because they are inherent. We have always had the right:

- to govern ourselves,
- to own our land
- to make our own laws
- to safeguard our language and culture

These rights have been infringed on in many ways since Canada was formed. But since 1982, our rights have been recognized in Section 35 of the Canadian Constitution – the highest law in the country. With a self-government agreement (to be negotiated prior to treaty) and a treaty, our governance system will be enshrined in the Canadian Constitution and our laws will hold sway.

WE ARE TAKING OUR PLACE AS EQUALS

“Indigenous peoples have the right to maintain and strengthen their distinct political, legal, economic, social and cultural institutions, while retaining their right to participate fully, if they so choose, in the political, economic, social and cultural life of the State.”

United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (Article 5)

We may not agree with the way this country was formed, or the racist ways our people have been treated over the last 150 years, but we believe that working together is the way forward. One of

the Calls to Action of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (45) seeks a reaffirmation of the nation-to-nation relationship between Aboriginal peoples and the Crown. There may be multiple paths to get to this relationship, but the SXTA leadership believe that entering into a treaty, which is protected by the Canadian Constitution, is the best way forward.



The Rock and the Tree: Xélxeylamós (Lady Franklin Rock) is the fixed part of our treaty, which encompasses the treaty principles and key commitments. Xpá:yelhp is the red cedar tree that grows and represents our evolving relationship with Canada and British Columbia.

WHAT LAW-MAKING POWERS DO WE WANT?

“We’re looking for longevity and sustenance in a relationship that’s going to be good for us, good for our neighbors, and also good for the [other] governments of [Canada].”

Skw’omkw’emexw Grand Chief Joe Hall

Our National and Village governments will choose which powers we draw down as we move forward. Here are a few of the many jurisdictions that the SXTA considers essential:

- Citizenship: We will decide who will be members of our communities. All members will receive benefits from our governance structure.
- Health and education: We will provide services based on our own values.
- Natural resources and environmental protection: Nothing will happen on our lands without our approval.
- Child protection: We will look after our families based on our own laws.
- Justice: We will solve our own conflicts in our own way.

ELECTED VERSUS HEREDITARY

Each community creates its own Shxwelméxwelh/ Constitution and chooses its own governance system. Under our Constitution, the National Government will not become involved in the selection of Community Leadership at present.

- Ch’iyáqtel/Tzeachten and Leq’á:mel hold general elections for Chief and Councillors.
- Sq’ewqéyl/Skowkale holds elections among family groups for Councillors and among the whole village for Chief.
- Áthelets/Aitchelitz, Sq’ewá:lxw/Skawahlook and Yeqwyeqwi:ws/Yakweakwioose have hereditary leaders.

S’ólh Lets’emó:t (Our One Thought) is the name for our treaty and is represented in a visual way by the image on the back cover. The pattern on the Swōqw’elh (blanket) was designed by Chief Terry Horne. The red represents Stó:lō Xwexwilmexw and the black represents the other governments of Canada. The meeting of the two colours in the middle represents collaboration with mutual respect.

Art by Jared Deck, Ch’iyáqtel



WHAT OTHER TREATY COMMUNITIES HAVE TO SAY:

Three of our treaty neighbours came to Tzeachten Hall in March 2019 and discussed life after treaty. Our leaders also visited the Maa-nulth Nations in February 2020:

“Maa-nulth Nations could not remain under the Indian Act and achieve our goals of becoming strong, self-governing, self-reliant nations where culture, language, spirituality and economy flourish for all. This includes controlling our own destiny; living in healthy communities and reinstituting governance that reflects who we are, and where we come from.”

Angela Wesley, Maa’nulth

“Finalizing a treaty is not the end of the work – it’s the beginning. A completed treaty comes with a whole new set of assets and responsibilities. If we are prepared to handle these assets and responsibilities, then we are a lot better off than we were under the Indian Act.”

Roy Francis, Tla’amin

“The Tsawwassen Government has enacted 23 pieces of legislation, including a Government Organization Act, which along with their Constitution, lays out their Governance structure. As well, they have a land act, a financial accountability and a conflict of interest act.”

Tanya Corbet, Tsawwassen

Take the self-guided Treaty Tour today!

www.sxta.bc.ca/treatytour

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

The goal of the “What Does Stó:lō Xwexwilmexw Government Mean to Me?” brochure is to offer our vision for governance. Contact outreach@sxta.bc.ca or 604 824 3281 with any questions or comments.