



NEWS RELEASE

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Office of the Premier
Ministry of Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation

YALE, PROVINCE A MAJOR STEP CLOSER TO FINAL TREATY

VICTORIA – With the signing of an understanding today by Yale First Nation Chief Robert Hope and chief negotiators from the Province, B.C. moved a step closer to having final agreements under the B.C. treaty process with seven First Nations, announced Premier Gordon Campbell.

“Today marks a significant milestone in our province’s history,” said Premier Campbell. “The Province and Yale First Nation have concluded the negotiation of all substantive issues between them respecting a final agreement that will bring tremendous benefits to Yale First Nation members, and all British Columbians. We should celebrate the very bright future we can create through agreements like this one signed today with Yale First Nation, who are committed to building opportunities for their community.”

Today’s announcement is an interim step prior to the final agreement being initialled by the Province, Yale First Nation and Canada.

The proposed treaty agreement includes fee simple ownership of lands including 1,599 hectares of provincial Crown land, as well as existing reserve land, for a total of 1,820 hectares, with a capital transfer of \$10.7 million and economic development funding of \$2.2 million. Yale will have the right to harvest fish, wildlife and migratory birds and to gather plants in their traditional territory. Yale and Canada are continuing to work to resolve matters related to fisheries and outstanding specific land claims.

“I want to thank the negotiators on both sides for the dedication and commitment they have shown in working toward a treaty that will increase certainty for the region and strengthen our respective communities,” said Chief Hope. “The benefits of a treaty will be far-reaching and will make possible a better economic future for members of Yale First Nation, especially for our children. I look forward to the day when Yale First Nation people have the same advantages and standard of living as our non-First Nation neighbours.”

A First Nation whose traditional territory and existing reserves are within the present-day Fraser Valley Regional District (FVRD), Yale First Nation’s main reserve is approximately 20 kilometres north of Hope. Yale First Nation is composed of approximately 150 members and 16 existing reserves.

“Treaties are a full and formal expression of reconciliation; they provide tools to close the socio-economic gap between First Nations and other British Columbians and are the foundation of the New Relationship,” said Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation Minister Michael de Jong. “Finalizing this treaty will give Yale First Nation modern governance tools to build strong and workable relationships with all levels of government, and will provide them with rights, as well as obligations, regarding self-government, land and resources.”

Yale First Nation entered the BC Treaty Commission process in April 1994. In March 2006, representatives from Yale First Nation and the governments of British Columbia and Canada signed an agreement-in-principle, laying the foundation for final agreement negotiations.

There are currently 59 First Nations in the treaty process in British Columbia. Forty-two First Nations are currently negotiating agreements-in-principle, and four are negotiating to finalize a treaty, including Yale First Nation. Implementation of B.C.’s first modern day urban treaty with the Tsawwassen First Nation will take place next spring.

Visit the Ministry of Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation’s website at www.gov.bc.ca/arr for more information.

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1 backgrounder(s) attached.

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BACKGROUND

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PROVINCE, YALE FIRST NATION CONCLUDE NEGOTIATIONS

The Province and Yale First Nation have completed their negotiations toward a treaty and reached an understanding on the substantive elements of a final agreement.

The next step in the treaty process is the continuation of negotiations between Yale First Nation and Canada to resolve technical matters relating to salmon fisheries and a specific claim with respect to Kuthlalth Indian Reserve #3 (approximately 143 hectares). The parties will continue to work with other First Nations prior to completion of the treaty. Once a final agreement is initialled by all parties, Yale First Nation members will vote on whether to ratify the agreement.

Some of the issues typically discussed as part of treaty negotiations fall within the scope of provincial responsibilities while others, such as the salmon fishery and Indian reserve lands, are the responsibility of the federal government. British Columbia and Yale First Nation have reached agreement on all elements of the draft final agreement that fall under provincial jurisdiction, including: provincial crown lands; many governance issues, including local government relations; culture; wildlife; and forestry.

Provincial portion of the capital transfer

Under the proposed agreement, British Columbia will pay \$2.5 million of the \$10.7 million capital transfer over 10 years and 50 per cent of a \$2.2-million Economic Development Fund, to be paid out over three years through the Fiscal Financing Agreement.

Land

With respect to provincial laws, Yale First Nation Land will be treated as private land. Under the treaty Yale First Nation will own in fee simple approximately 1,820 hectares of provincial crown land and former Indian Reserves. Subject to the resolution of the specific claim, an additional 143 hectares of Indian Reserve land could be added to treaty settlement lands. The final agreement will include ownership of sub-surface resources on or under Yale First Nation Land.

Wildlife and plant harvesting

Under the final agreement, Yale First Nation will have the right to harvest wildlife and migratory birds, and to gather plants from a designated area for their own use. Yale First Nation will have law-making authority to regulate their members' harvest of wildlife and migratory birds. Overall management of these activities remains the responsibility of the provincial or federal minister. Within the terms set out in the final agreement, Yale First Nation members do not need to have federal or provincial licences, or pay any fees or royalties to harvest wildlife, migratory birds or plants.

Culture

Yale First Nation may make laws applicable on Yale First Nation Lands to preserve, promote and practise their language and culture. This includes Yale First Nation history, feasts, ceremonies, naming practices, symbols, stories, songs, and dances, and also to conserve, protect, design and manage heritage sites, as well as make similar laws respecting Yale First Nation artifacts owned by Yale First Nation.

Forestry

Yale First Nation will own all forest resources on Yale First Nation Land. As a treaty First Nation, the Yale government may make laws respecting forest resources and practices on their land.

Approximately 21 hectares of the provincial crown land to be transferred to the First Nation as Treaty Settlement Land is currently designated as part of the Agricultural Land Reserve (ALR); this designation will not change.

Treaties

British Columbia's treaty negotiation process was developed to provide a framework for treaty negotiations among First Nations, and the governments of British Columbia and Canada. The treaty process is managed by the British Columbia Treaty Commission (BCTC), an independent, neutral body that helps facilitate negotiations among the three negotiating parties.

The BCTC process has been in place since 1992 and is open to all First Nations in the province on a voluntary basis. It is up to First Nations to decide how they organize themselves for the purposes of treaty negotiations. At some tables there is a single First Nation represented, while at others there may be two or more.

The treaty process consists of six stages as follows:

- Stage 1 – Statement of intent to negotiate
- Stage 2 – Readiness to negotiate
- Stage 3 – Negotiation of a framework agreement
- Stage 4 – Negotiation of an agreement-in-principle
- Stage 5 – Negotiation to finalize a final agreement or treaty
- Stage 6 – Implementation of the treaty

In addition to improving the quality of life for Aboriginal people, treaties stimulate investment, create jobs and expand economic opportunities throughout the province.

For more information on treaties, visit www.gov.bc.ca/arr.

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