



STÓ:LŌ TRIBAL COUNCIL

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For Immediate Release

Re: Ministers ink Yale Treaty Deal at Secret Location

Desperate to show progress on the flagging BC Treaty file, the federal Minister of Indian Affairs, Chuck Strahl, and the BC Government's Minister of Aboriginal Relations & Reconciliation, George Abbott, closeted themselves away at an undisclosed location today to initial the Final Agreement with the Yale Band. Plans were made to initial the agreement at a public gathering at Camp Squeah in the Fraser Canyon, but that plan was suddenly scuttled once the two Minister's realized that they were going to get a frosty reception from the other twenty-three Sto:lo First Nations who share the Fraser Canyon's lands and highly productive salmon fishery. In a move designed to avoid facing the more than 100 Sto:lo fishermen gathered at Camp Squeah this morning, Minister's Chuck Strahl and George Abbott and Chief Bob Hope of Yale shifted the venue for the John Hancock ritual signing from Camp Squeah to a secret location. "If the Minister's need to hide away at a secret spot to sign this Final Agreement with the Yale Band, what are they hiding from the public? And where is their respect for the 7000 Sto:lo who are the true aboriginal title and rights holders in the Fraser Canyon?" asks Grand Chief Clarence Pennier of the Sto:lo Tribal Council.

In the final agreement with the Yale Band, the band stands to get 1,966 hectares of treaty settlement lands which includes 217 hectares of former Indian reserves and 1,749 hectares of Crown lands owned in fee simple. And an additional 21 hectares of provincial Crown land designated as Agricultural Land Reserve. On top of the land, the band will get \$12.9 million in cash and a share of the Fraser River's salmon runs. In a self-congratulatory statement, Minister Strahl said, "Initialing this agreement demonstrates Canada's commitment to find common solutions through negotiations. It also shows the BC Treaty process is producing results. Yale First Nation will have the tools and authority to take control of its future, to build a healthy, prosperous and strong community, and to contribute to a stronger Canada". Not to be outdone by the federal Minister of Indian Affairs, Minister Abbott added, "Today's announcement, the latest in a series of significant agreements negotiated recently with First Nations in B.C, is a celebration of the spirit of the New Relationship. This treaty will be the foundation upon which Yale members can realize self-government and economic certainty, and will help to close the social and economic gaps between Yale and their non-Aboriginal neighbors".

While the forging words from the Ministers are pretty and high sounding, Sto:lo Tribal Council Tribal Chief Tyrone McNeil says the treaty will produce exactly the opposite

outcome for the Yale Band and the 23 other Sto:lo First Nations who fish in the Fraser Canyon, share the geography of the place and a common history extending back 9000 years. “This treaty will fail because both levels of government decided to underwrite a deal with the Yale Band that will be tested in the courts and fought out on the rock walls of the Fraser Canyon. Our fishing families will not subordinate their fishing rights to the Yale Band. And our people will not go cap in hand to the Yale Band to get access to their ancient fishing spots and dry-racks. It’s just not on. And what is more, we are the proper title holders to the very Crown lands and reserve lands that both the provincial and federal governments plan to hand over to the Yale Band under this treaty. Given this reality, Ministers Strahl and Abbott just committed both Ottawa and Victoria to spend millions of dollars in the courts defending their decision to ignore the broader Sto:lo community in favour of extending a highly doubtful treaty to the Yale Band. And policing agencies such as the RCMP and the Department of Fisheries & Oceans will need to ramp up their budgets to oversee the fishery in the Fraser Canyon. And the certainty and stability promised to surrounding non-Aboriginal communities by both Ottawa and Victoria will prove to be nothing more than a chimera. Let’s be clear, the Yale Band will be forced to forfeit much of the money promised to them under the treaty to future court costs”, said McNeil

Grand Chief Pennier says that the Sto:lo Tribal Council is swinging into high gear, putting together a long-term strategy and roster of hardnosed tactics to counter the impacts of the Yale treaty. “We are meeting now and we have the support of hundreds of our fishermen. They are demanding that we help them defend their fishing rights in the Fraser Canyon. Our fishing people spoke with passion and resolve today. It is our duty to protect our aboriginal title in the Fraser Canyon and to support our fishing families at their fishing grounds. My message to Ministers Chuck Strahl and George Abbott is that you both stumbled badly this morning but you still have time to rectify the situation. Hiding out as you did today was a big mistake. If you are truly proud of the deal with the Yale Band, you should not hesitate to meet with us at the earliest opportunity. Do you have the basic decency and courage to do so”? asked Grand Chief Pennier.

For more information, please contact Grand Chef Clarence Pennier at: 1 604-798-2432 cell or Tribal Chief Tyrone McNeil at: 1 604-798-1509.