
NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release
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Doig River First Nation
Halfway River First Nation
Fort Nelson First Nation
Saulteau First Nations
Office of the Premier
Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship
Ministry of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation
Ministry of Energy, Mines and Low Carbon Innovation
Ministry of Environment and Climate Change Strategy
Ministry of Forests

B.C., Treaty 8 First Nations build path forward together

VICTORIA – The Province and four Treaty 8 First Nations – Fort Nelson, Saulteau, Halfway River and Doig River First Nations – have reached consensus on a collaborative approach to land and resource planning, and to advance regional solutions to benefit everyone living in northeastern B.C. and Treaty 8 territory.

The agreements follow a June 2021 B.C. Supreme Court ruling that determined that the constitutionally protected Treaty 8 rights of the Blueberry River First Nations have been breached by the cumulative impacts of industrial development authorized by successive provincial governments over many years.

Since the court decision, these First Nations and the Province have worked closely to co-develop an initial partnership approach for the planning and management of lands and resources. Together, the Province and partner First Nations have co-developed a set of initiatives, termed the Consensus Document. It will address the cumulative impacts of industrial development on the meaningful exercise of Treaty 8 rights in the territory, restore the land, and provide stability and predictability for industry in the region.

The initiatives set out in the Consensus Document build a path that meets the Crown’s obligations to uphold the constitutionally protected rights of Treaty 8 First Nations, restore the environment and support responsible resource development and economic activity in the northeast. This will ensure that, together, the Province and the First Nations are stewarding the land in an effort to achieve sustainability for future generations.

The initiatives include:

- a new approach to wildlife co-management that promotes improved shared understanding and management of wildlife;
- new land-use plans and protection measures;
- a “cumulative effects” management system, linked to natural resource landscape planning and restoration initiatives;
- pilot projects to advance shared decision-making for planning and stewardship activities;

- a multi-year, shared restoration fund to help heal the land;
- a new revenue-sharing approach to support the priorities of Treaty 8 First Nations communities; and
- actions to promote education about Treaty 8 through collaborative promotion, anti-racism training and awareness building.

The Province will continue to provide regular updates to and seek input from industry, local governments and residents of the northeast as we continue this work. In addition, discussions are ongoing with McLeod Lake Indian Band, Prophet River First Nation and West Moberly First Nations.

Quotes:

Chief Trevor Makadahay, Doig River First Nation –

“Doig River First Nation has been advocating for a meaningful role in decision-making in natural resource development in our territory for many years and we are looking forward to working with the Province in the months ahead to make this a reality. We are confident that through this important work, which includes developing a new fiscal relationship between Treaty 8 First Nations and the Province, we will create economic certainty, heal the land and our people, and create overall stability for the region for generations to come.”

Chief Sharleen Gale, Fort Nelson First Nation –

“Fort Nelson First Nation is determined to take up our rightful role in the stewardship of our land in accordance with our Treaty Rights and our cultural, legal and social traditions. This interim agreement is an important step in achieving that vision. We look forward to working with B.C. and the other Treaty 8 communities in using it as a stepping-stone to establish a harmonized relationship that fosters the well-being of our community and everyone living in the Northeast.”

Chief Darlene Hunter, Halfway River First Nation –

“Industrial development has impacted our lands and disrupted our ability to practice our Treaty Rights and maintain our Dane-Zaa way of life. We are optimistic that through working together with B.C. and our neighbours, we can develop a better approach that supports Treaty Rights and local communities.”

Chief Justin Napoleon, Sauleau First Nations –

“For many years our treaty rights have been neglected and discounted, and our treaty lands and our communities have been fragmented by the cumulative impacts of poorly planned land-use decisions. This new agreement shows that this government intends to work with us to find new ways for co-management and true partnership. We believe that we can protect environmental and cultural values, and support communities through better planning for long-term and sustainable economic activity.”

Premier David Eby –

“Our shared work to co-develop these agreements represents a historic milestone for Treaty 8 Nations, for B.C. and for all of us who believe the path to reconciliation is through negotiation,

not litigation. The future lies in a partnership approach to land, water and resource stewardship, one that strikes a better balance to honour Treaty 8, while providing more stability for people and industry in the region.”

Josie Osborne, Minister of Energy, Mines and Low Carbon Innovation –

“The Consensus Document offers a new way of working together based on ongoing relationships, not one-off transactions. It sets a collective table over a larger, shared First Nations territory to discuss interests in healing the land, protection of treaty rights, and in development activities and economic opportunities. This is the way of the future for natural-resource development in British Columbia, and it will build greater certainty and stability across the landscape for British Columbians and industry. I commend the leadership of the Treaty 8 Nation Chiefs in leading the way in this partnership work with the Province.”

Dale Bumstead, principal, Scion Strategies Ltd. –

“This historic agreement with our Treaty 8 leadership demonstrates the commitment by our First Nation neighbours that there is a way forward for a strong and prosperous future for all in northeastern British Columbia. We need to all work together to ensure that as we see resource development occur for the economic benefits, that we also work side by side to heal the land and heal the people for a strong and healthy future for us all.”

Quick Facts:

- The Treaty 8 Nations in B.C. are: Doig River, Fort Nelson, Halfway River, McLeod Lake, Prophet River, Sauteau, West Moberly First Nations and Blueberry River.
- Honouring Treaty 8 is a crucial part of B.C.’s work to meet the Crown’s legal obligations to treaty and uphold the constitutionally protected rights of Treaty 8 First Nations and advance the directives of the court in the Yahey decision (Yahey v. British Columbia 2021 BCSC 1287).
- There are several fiscal components to the Consensus Document, including revenue sharing, interim capacity funding and a significant restoration fund.
- During the next two years, B.C. and Treaty 8 Nations will work as partners to promote respect for Treaty 8 through various initiatives, such as educational sessions, public engagement on racism and First Nations cultural training.

Learn More:

The full agreement(s) will be posted online in the coming weeks.

Doig River First Nation: <https://doigriverfn.com/>

Halfway River First Nation: <https://halfwayrivergroup.ca/halfway-river-first-nation.php>

Fort Nelson First Nation: <http://www.fortnelsonfirstnation.org/>

Sauteau First Nations: <https://www.saulteau.com/>

Treaty 8 Tribal Association: <http://treaty8.bc.ca/>

A backgrounder follows.

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BACKGROUND

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What people are saying about Treaty 8 Nation Agreements

Nathan Cullen, Minister of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship –

“These agreements are about righting past wrongs and upholding the legally protected Treaty Rights of Treaty 8 Nations in B.C. We need to come together to heal and restore the land, demonstrating how a new way of working in partnership to steward land and resources can not only be possible, but also prosperous for all. This is important work for all of us. It’s about leaving the land in a good way for future generations.”

Murray Rankin, Minister of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation –

“Our government is committed to upholding our obligations under Treaty 8. The consensus we’ve reached today with Fort Nelson, Saulteau, Halfway River and Doig River First Nations sets us on a path toward a future where Treaty 8 First Nations members can meaningfully exercise their rights, and where we can work together to build a healthy and prosperous northeastern B.C. for everyone.”

Bruce Ralston, Minister of Forests –

“Fundamental to Treaty 8 Nations is the right to healthy forests and wildlife habitats. Together, we are working on a new approach so that forests and wildlife are restored, protected and better managed now and for generations to come. I am confident that our forests will continue to sustain our communities and I want to thank the Nations for their participation in reaching this agreement and offering their commitment to move forward in partnership.”

George Heyman, Minister of Environment and Climate Change Strategy –

“We acknowledge and agree Treaty 8 Nations must be granted full and meaningful exercise of their treaty rights and development of their lands must be in accordance with their rights, title and culture. This agreement provides a framework that will address the cumulative impacts of industrial development and will ensure our path forward is based on environmental sustainability as a core guiding principle. Only through true partnership, collaboration and good faith can we advance collective economic solutions that will benefit our climate, environment

and communities.”

Leonard Hiebert, chair, Peace River Regional District –

“The regional district is confident that this consensus agreement sets a positive path forward based on partner-centred leadership. We are pleased that the Treaty 8 First Nations and the B.C. government have come to this point in the process through collaboration and mutual respect.”

Michael Rose, president and CEO, Tourmaline –

“Tourmaline is pleased with this new framework for oil and gas development that will create significant prosperity for the people and the Province, for Blueberry River First Nations and all the Treaty 8 First Nations of B.C., and for industry. Providing low-emission Canadian natural gas to the world is one of the best things we can do for the global atmosphere and the overall Canadian economy.”

Izwan Ismail, president and CEO, Petronas Energy Canada Ltd. –

“Petronas Canada is encouraged that agreements have been reached between the Government of British Columbia and Treaty 8 Nations in an important step toward reconciliation and the management of cumulative impacts. As a global energy leader, we look to B.C.’s world class North Montney basin and LNG Canada as cornerstones of both our global portfolio and B.C.’s important economic and environmental opportunity to deliver the world’s lowest-emission LNG. With this important agreement in place, our collaborative relationship with Treaty 8 Nations and our commitment to sustainable development, including land restoration, continues. It is our expectation that the necessary work can now proceed to ensure that the gas Petronas Canada delivers to the LNG Canada project is responsibly produced right here in B.C., benefiting the entire province and country.”

Tristan Goodman, president and CEO, The Explorers and Producers Association of Canada –

“The agreement between the British Columbia government and Indigenous communities in northeastern B.C. provides much-needed clarity to move forward with natural gas development. These historic agreements demonstrate a commitment from all parties to reconciliation and the environmentally conscious development of B.C.’s natural resources. British Columbia’s clean and responsibly produced natural gas can support Canada’s climate goals and supply the world with lower carbon, reliable and affordable energy. The agreement offers opportunities for economic prosperity for Indigenous communities and contributes revenues to support provincial priorities, such as health care and affordable housing.”

Lisa Baiton, president and CEO, Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers (CAPP) –

“Indigenous partnerships and participation are integral to the success of the natural gas and oil industry in British Columbia. CAPP and our members appreciate the diligent efforts of the Province of B.C. and the Doig River, Halfway River, Fort Nelson and Sauteau First Nations to reach this detailed agreement. This, along with the Blueberry River First Nations agreement, is a positive step forward. We are looking forward to gaining a better understanding of the details within the agreements which we believe can chart a path forward that enables the responsible development of B.C.’s rich natural resources in a way that ensures mutual benefits for industry,

Indigenous Nations and British Columbians across the province.”

Linda Coady, president and CEO, BC Council of Forest Industries (COFI) –

“As this agreement is implemented and more details made known, COFI will work with our members to support a path forward that reflects our recognition of Indigenous rights and our commitment to supporting sustainable forestry, people and communities. More broadly, and as important conversations about the future of forestry continue to take place across the province, we will keep collaborating with partners to further maximize the role a strong and sustainable forest industry can play in advancing reconciliation, fighting climate change and delivering good jobs for British Columbians today and into the future.”

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