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## NEWS RELEASE

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Ministry of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation  
Leq'á:mel First Nation  
Mathexwi (Matsqui) First Nation  
Semá:th (Sumas) First Nation  
City of Mission

### **Historic agreement brings together municipal, provincial, First Nations governments**

Updated July 21, 2021, for clarification

MISSION – S'olh Temexw – An agreement signed today by the Province, Leq'á:mel, Matsqui and Sumas First Nations and the City of Mission will return traditional lands to the First Nations and establish new public parklands and recreation areas.

Leq'á:mel Chief Alice Thompson, Matsqui Chief Alice McKay and Sumas Chief Dalton Silver were joined by Murray Rankin, Minister of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation, and Paul Horn, mayor of Mission, for the signing of Í:xel Sq'eq'ó, a Hul'qumi'num phrase, which translates to English as “Together We Paddle.”

The agreement is unique in that it brings together First Nations, the Province and the local government. Under the agreement, the Province will transfer approximately 60 hectares of Crown land to the LMS Society, which represents the three First Nations. The lands will be subdivided to create a park parcel of approximately 50 hectares, which will be leased to Mission to manage for public use as a community park and recreational area, and two development parcels, to be developed by the First Nations to support much-needed housing in the area and increase economic and social opportunities.

A park management plan will be collaboratively developed by LMS and Mission to maintain the natural character of the area, protect sensitive environmental elements, enhance cultural and historic understanding, and guide improvements over time.

The ceremony was held in Mission at Fraser River Heritage Park, which is directly adjacent to the new park lands.

#### **Quotes:**

##### **Leq'á:mel Chief Alice Thompson –**

“This agreement demonstrates what is possible when Indigenous Nations, the Province and local government come together for the benefit of our Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities. This agreement is a foundation for a lasting relationship based on mutual respect and recognition, and we look forward to working in partnership with the city for the protection of the park area and the sustainable development of the lands that are being returned to us.”

##### **Matsqui Chief Alice McKay –**

“The return of our lands is fundamental to who we are as Indigenous Nations. We have been working to have these parcels come back to us for a decade. We are very pleased that we have achieved this in partnership with local government. We need to work together to ensure that Indigenous and non-Indigenous citizens in our territories have a foundation for positive and mutually beneficial relationships.”

**Sumas Chief Dalton Silver –**

“I am proud that we have come together as Leq’á:mel, Mathexwi, and Semá:th to share in this landmark opportunity to have our lands returned. We will honour the memories and the wisdom of our ancestors in how we work together as family, protect our lands and develop them to bring opportunities to our Nations. I recognize the efforts of the Province and the city to make our vision a reality.”

**Murray Rankin, Minister of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation –**

“Leq’á:mel, Matsqui, Sumas, the City of Mission and the Province have worked hard to create a unique, forward-looking agreement that meets the needs of all members of the community. It stands as an example of how governments in B.C. can work together to advance reconciliation, create economic opportunity and enhance the quality of life in communities.”

**Paul Horn, mayor, City of Mission –**

“The City of Mission is honoured to be part of this historic agreement. It is a unique initiative, and we believe it shows how reconciliation can strengthen community for all. Mission is determined to be part of a new path forward for local government-First Nation relationships. Our history has included many examples of injustice and disrespect toward Indigenous Peoples. It is time to write a new chapter, one that builds partnerships.

**Pam Alexis, MLA for Abbotsford-Mission –**

“Today, we celebrate a historic land transfer agreement between the LMS Society, Mission and the provincial government – one that will see approximately 60 hectares of undeveloped Crown land change hands. It is a day of both reconciliation and opportunity, and one that should be remembered for years to come. Today is a day I am honoured to be a part of.”

**Bob D’Eith, MLA for Maple Ridge-Mission –**

“I am excited to celebrate this historic agreement between the City of Mission, the provincial government and the LMS Society. I’m confident this project will be more than beautiful new parkland and possible economic opportunities. It will help lay the groundwork for future successful reconciliation throughout B.C.”

**Quick Facts:**

- The lands will be subdivided into a park parcel, to be leased to Mission for 99 years for a nominal fee, and two development parcels.
- The name for the park will be determined by LMS and Mission at a future date.
- The lands being transferred are adjacent to the grounds of the former St. Mary’s Residential School. Plans are in development for site research with ground-penetrating radar.

**Learn More:**

Link to the agreement:

<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/environment/natural-resource-stewardship/consulting-with-first-nations/first-nations-negotiations/first-nations-a-z-listing/st-lo-nation1>

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