

Open House for residents regarding Blueberry River First Nations Treaty Land Entitlement (TLE) Red Creek Parcels

March 12, 2020

Summary of question and answer period with audience

1.0 Introduction

This is a summary of a public meeting held March 12, 2020 to engage with local residents and stakeholders on proposed land transfers to Blueberry River First Nations as part of a Treaty Land Entitlement settlement. The meeting provided opportunities for residents and stakeholders to learn more and ask questions about the proposed land transfers and the Treaty Land Entitlement process which is currently being negotiated between Blueberry River First Nations, the Province and the federal government.

Information about Treaty Land Entitlement (TLE) and proposed land transfers in northeast B.C. can be found online at: <https://engage.gov.bc.ca/govtogetherbc/consultation/land-transfers-in-northeast-british-columbia/>

Note: The statements and questions raised by members of the public, and recorded in this summary, do not reflect the views of the Province of British Columbia.

The questions raised at the meeting have been summarised, and to the best extent possible, this summary reflects the dialogue between attendees and provincial representatives. We have added additional information for participants in [square brackets] where we did not originally respond at the meeting, did not respond fully, or followed up afterward to get an answer we were unable to provide at the meeting. Questions were primarily answered by Doug Konkin, Chief Negotiator with the Ministry of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation (MIRR) and Dale Morgan, Regional Executive Director, MIRR. Their answers were based on the information available at the time of the public meeting.

2.0 Session Information

Provincial Representatives:

Facilitator: Jocelyn Paul, Director Strategic Initiatives, MIRR

Presenter: Doug Konkin, Chief Negotiator, MIRR

Panel: Doug Konkin, Dale Morgan (MIRR Regional Executive Director, North), Tara Forest (MIRR Regional Negotiator), Jason Lawson (Crown Lands Specialist, Ministry of Forests, Lands and Natural Resource Operations and Rural Development)

Support: Jana Bock, Renee Simard, Penny Vanderwekken-Dunn (MIRR Senior Resources Information Officers), Sue Campbell (Regional Negotiator).

Blueberry River First Nations Representatives

Simon Turner, Negotiator/Legal Counsel; and Deane Strongitharm, Community Planner.

Agenda

Location: Charlie Lake Community Hall

Date: March 12, 2020

Time: 2:00 p.m. – 9:30 p.m.

Time	Topic
2 pm	Doors Open (small group discussions)
7 pm	TLE Presentation (followed by Q&A)

3.0 Presentation Summary

Doug Konkin presented an overview of the progress and status of TLE negotiations with Blueberry River First Nations, including specific information about the Red Creek TLE shortfall land selection and a summary of stakeholder concerns to date.

4.0 Opening Remarks (following the 7 pm presentation)

A Blueberry River First Nations' representative provided opening comments, and a long-time resident representing the Red Creek area also provided opening remarks by invitation.

Blueberry River First Nations Opening Remarks (Dean Strongitharm, Community Planner)

Deane added context to the overview of previous stakeholder comments. He noted that Blueberry River First Nations would adhere to BC Hydro's required transmission line setbacks. Further, like others in the region, Blueberry's experience living near sour gas wells and pipelines will be a consideration in any future development proposals. The lack of potable water could present opportunities to partner with residents and the Peace River Regional District to develop water servicing. The community is interested in small scale and horse pasture agricultural uses. Finally, it is relatively common to develop lands that have previously been logged and Blueberry would need to address any potential contamination.

Charlie Lake Resident 7 pm Opening Remarks (Joyce Smith)

Joyce opened by noting that the open house is an opportunity to share information, and not a negotiation. She spoke about the importance of rural lifestyle to the residents in the subdivision. Her main concern was to ensure residents and others continue to have access to adjacent lands for snowmobiling, tobogganing, walking, and enjoying wildlife. This is one of the few places, other than the Beaton hills, where beginners can recreate close to Fort St. John. People moved to Red Creek for a wilderness lifestyle and see their quality of life as threatened. They want to be consulted before a decision is made, to be heard and know they matter.

Joyce indicated residents are unhappy as they feel Vesco forestry left behind contaminated lands. They are disappointed that government put the Red Creek and Charlie Lake TLE parcels back on the table in 2017, after removing them from consideration in 2016. They also feel that Minister Fraser should have personally responded to their letters.

5.0 Question and Answer Summary (7 pm presentation)

Speaker #1

Context: Clarence Apsassin, a member of Blueberry River First Nations, spoke at length and we have summarised his comments here. An immediate provincial response was not provided; we have added a response below.

Comment: Clarence expressed concern regarding Blueberry's current leadership.

He stated that Chief and Council are not following the custom election process, having general band meetings, informing members of TLE decisions or building community support. Relationships between Blueberry River First Nations (BRFN) and local residents used to be about helping each other and trading.

Blueberry has deep connections to certain areas at Beaton River and Pink Mountain. However, not all Blueberry members support selecting the Red Creek parcel as part of the TLE. Reasons for this include: the land is not valuable, BRFN should not be picking land in people's backyards, Vesco was a bad deal, and Blueberry moved from the old village in the 1980s because of a sour gas blow-out.

Clarence also suggested community divisions within BRFN could affect ratifying the Settlement and Lands Agreements and that BRFN should not accept lands without mineral rights.

Response: [The Province is negotiating with Blueberry's elected Chief and Council to develop a mutually acceptable settlement package. We are committed to a transparent public engagement process so that all individuals and organizations potentially impacted by the land transfers can be heard.

Blueberry River First Nations has its own governing body and is responsible to inform its members about TLE. The community must formally ratify the agreement package by way of a community vote, and approval by a majority of community members is required to approve the settlement.

Blueberry's Chief and Council provided a Band Council Resolution (BCR) on March 31, 2020 signed by the Chief of Blueberry River First Nations and all five councillors supporting the TLE selections.

We acknowledge that since the time of this open house, the Blueberry River First Nations' leadership has come internally into dispute. While the Province continues to work with the elected Chief and Council's appointed representatives, we are moving ahead cautiously.]

Blueberry's representative, Simon Turner, noted that that the Blueberry River First Nations community ratified the custom election process through a full community voting process in 2016 and implemented the custom process in 2017. The Chief is elected, and the five councillors each represent a family group under the process adopted in 2017. The councillors consult with their families and the families speak through their representatives on council. Blueberry has supported the five land selection areas since 2004 and continues to support the current lands that have been selected.

Speaker #2

Context: Member of the public.

Comment: Will provincial legislation apply once lands are transferred to Canada?

Response: While most provincial legislation will no longer apply, federal legislation will apply on lands once they transfer to Canada, and development must follow legislation and regulations that are applicable on federal lands.

Speaker #3

Context: Red Creek resident, Logan Drapeau comments are summarized. An immediate response was not provided; we have added a response below.

Comment: Red Creek residents have a long history of fighting hard for their community.

We are caretakers and stewards of the land. We have stood against development in the area for years, including speaking against the Vesco deal (and clean-up that did not happen), the BC Hydro development and placement of the transmission line, and Canfor's harvesting plans. We spend time pruning and cutting trails to keep them open for snowmobiling and chasing away people who dump garbage. We are a tightly knit community that harvests game and firewood responsibly. Why has Chief Yahey not reached out to work with us if the adjacent land is important to Blueberry? We will continue to protect the land unless no longer allowed. We want to protect and enjoy the lands together.

Response: [We hear and respect that the community has so much appreciation and passion for this area, and we understand how important it is to the community. As part of the decision-making on land transfers, the Province is considering the interests of the community and other stakeholders, Blueberry's interests, and the need to finally settle TLE. One way Blueberry has considered the local area interests is by proposing a 100-200 meter buffer that would provide some additional treed area of Crown land adjacent to existing subdivision properties shown on the Open House wall panels (*see map appendix 1*).]

Speaker #4

Context: Red Creek resident. An immediate response was not provided; we have added a summary response below.

Comment: Why would Blueberry want this land? There's no water. You're not listening. Why don't people who are affected get a vote?

Response: [Blueberry has selected this land with the understanding that there is no drinking water on-site. Any development plans that Blueberry submits would require them to address how water would be supplied; similar to the subdivision which also lacks drinking water.]

We are committed to a transparent public engagement process so that all individuals and organizations who have interests in the land transfers can be heard.]

Follow-up Comment: (Blueberry member)

Member spoke about her concerns with the cancer caused to her family members after a blow-out of sour gas at Blueberry in the 1980s. She does not want to see land from Red Creek as part of TLE. The Apsassin family does not feel represented at Blueberry.

Response: [Living through such an event must have been very traumatic. It is our interest that Blueberry River First Nations implement internal community updates and information sharing in preparation for the ratification vote on the TLE settlement package, when ready. Blueberry First Nation members individually will have the opportunity to voice their views through a vote on TLE settlement. Meaningful reconciliation is about supporting Indigenous self-determination and respecting how First Nations choose to govern themselves.]

Follow-up comment: (Red Creek Resident)

Red Creek parcel not good for development but is good for recreation. Transferring this land will take away our recreation opportunities. How do you plan to rectify taking land away?

Response: The Province has undertaken a public engagement process to fully understand the interests as part of assessing the proposed land for transfer, and we are looking at how to balance a variety of interests in recommendations for decision. We will finalize comments, consider options, and make a recommendation to government. [Other factors being considered in a recommendation include the unfulfilled promises made under Treaty 8 over 100 years ago, previous *Land Act* designations for future development at Red Creek, and acknowledging that Blueberry made several changes to the Red Creek selection over the years. We have a legal obligation to settle TLE as much as possible in a way that balances the interests we are hearing from the public and Blueberry's interests.]

Follow-up Comment: The Province provided Blueberry with information about available lands. (Clarence Apsassin)

Response: [The Province does not choose the TLE parcels. The steps are as follows:

1. B.C. shares what Crown land is available and sets out land selection principles.
2. The First Nation identifies a land selection from available Crown land.

3. Government reviews all the information about the parcel and works to understand interests and concerns, through agency reviews, First Nations consultation and stakeholder engagement.
4. Government makes a recommendation based on available information.
5. Provincial decision makers determine if the land is suitable for transfer.
6. All legal interests must be addressed before a transfer can occur.

TLE is important and we have to settle. We are not taking private land away from people; we are making a decision about Crown land.]

Speaker #5

Context: Red Creek resident. An immediate response was not provided; we have added a summary response below.

Comment: Our houses back onto Crown land, we can just go out and hunt from our backyards. Government took the parcel off the table then put it back on.

Response: [This is a complex, multi-year negotiation, with discussions evolving over that time. The Red Creek lands have been supported and advanced by every Blueberry River First Nations leadership since 2005. We are continuing to review and assess input and develop recommendations for the Crown land parcels that First Nations identified were of interest during negotiations. The next steps will include finalizing the review of stakeholder input and making a recommendation regarding the proposed parcel for transfer. If approved for transfer, the land designation of the adjacent Crown land would change to federal lands.]

Speaker #6

Context: Member of the public, Ross Bannerman. The Province has added additional information to the response below.

Question: Will the Province consider alternative selections for the lands in question?

Response: Yes, the Province continues to be open to working with Blueberry if they are interested in finding suitable alternative land. We are prepared to look at anything that will meet the interests of the public and Blueberry. [We are working within the mandate for selecting Crown lands, and it is difficult to find land that is not already constrained by other legal interests. There is an alternative lands process that could allow for some changes to parcels (for example where a provincial road is excluded from the parcel).]

Follow-up Question: We see similarities with Blueberry River First Nations internal divisions and Wet'suwet'en elected and hereditary chiefs. For a decision as big as this, how can we not respect the need to ensure all of Blueberry River First Nations is part of the decision? (Ross Bannerman)

Follow-up Comment: Blueberry members will vote against the TLE package because they are not being listened to; and some members want traditional headmen instead of the current electoral process at Blueberry River First Nations. (Clarence Apsassin)

Response: [As mentioned previously, the Province is negotiating with Blueberry River First Nations elected Chief and Council to develop a mutually acceptable settlement package. We are committed to a transparent public engagement process so that all individuals and organizations potentially impacted by the land transfers can be heard. Blueberry has its own governing body and is responsible to inform its members about TLE. The community must formally ratify the agreement package by way of a community vote, and most of the community members approval is required to approve the settlement.]

Blueberry's representative, Simon Turner, noted that Blueberry River First Nations voted and chose their current custom election process. TLE agreements will be finalized, by community vote – each member will vote – on the proposed lands as a package. The majority will decide, and if the majority votes against it then the agreement ratification will fail.

Speaker #7

Context: Member of the Public. The Province has added additional information to the response below.

Question: Participant commented that the Ministry of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation needs to focus more on building community relationships instead of causing estrangement and alienation. Why rush into a decision?

Response: TLE land transfers have been outstanding for more than 100 years. Settling this issue is an extremely important step in reconciliation to both make up for lands that should have been given to First Nations, and to recognize the benefits the First Nations should have had from the land during that time.

Part of reconciliation is doing our best to right past wrongs while bringing people of all communities together. If TLE settlement could fail because of divisions in the community, then we need to have that discussion. [The negotiations for TLE have been in progress for nearly 15 years, and significant stakeholder engagement on these parcels has taken place in the past three years. The Province has a strong interest in finalizing the settlement.]

Speaker #8

Context: Red Creek Resident. The Province has added additional information to the response below.

Comment: Participant commented that he does not believe that the engagement process was undertaken with integrity. Public engagement only happened after selections were identified. Instead the process is fostering toxic tribalism and division. Local people have not been considered when there should be open process and reconciliation for all.

Response: [The Province is committed to a transparent and complete engagement process that fully captures the interests in land selections. Before we can begin engagement over a proposed land transfer, the Province needs to know which lands are proposed for the transfer

and internal approvals by both federal and provincial governments to move forward with negotiations on those lands also need to be in place.

The Province has been engaging with stakeholders for the past three years to understand the interests in these parcels. Land transfer reviews and decisions take a long time, and we understand that you are frustrated because we have not yet been able to share how your comments are being considered.]

The Province will take your comments and concerns seriously in developing a recommendation. Any decision, regardless of the outcome will be made having taken into consideration the comments and concerns we hear.

[We are committed to reporting out on any decisions and how your input was considered.]

[Note: The Province has conducted extensive stakeholder engagement since 2017, including specifically about Charlie Lake and Red Creek parcels. The Province has held more than 100 stakeholder engagements generally on Treaty Land Entitlement land parcels, including 11 open houses, responding to more than 60 letters, and approximately 25 meetings with publicly elected officials including MLAs and local communities. Provincial engagement specific to Charlie Lake and Red Creek parcels included nine small focused group meetings between 2017-2020, presenting parcels to the Peace River Regional District, the City of Fort St. John, and the Northeast Roundtable, as well as these two advertised open houses. Open Houses for Blueberry's TLE parcels were also held at Pink Mountain and Buick Creek in March 2019.]

Speaker #9

Context: Karen Goodings, Peace River Regional District Area B director. The Province has added additional information to the response below.

Question: How will recreation in the Red Creek area be considered and reported on?

Response: The more site-specific information you can provide about where there are trails, access points, sledding hills, etc., the better we will understand the interests. [We also will document other organizations' responses to our inquiries about recreation use in the area.]

Speaker #10

Context: Member of the public. An immediate response was not provided; we have added a summary response below.

Comment: People want of the entire Red Creek area turned into a park for the people.

Response: [Considering the establishment of a park at Red Creek is not within the scope of the provincial review of proposed land transfers. However, we would encourage people to provide input into other provincial programs and land use planning processes that can consider opportunities for land uses.]

Speaker #11

Context: Red Creek resident. The Province has added additional information in the response below.

Question: It feels like you are putting up a wall around the subdivision.

Response: First Nations followed land selection principles to select available Crown lands in their traditional territory as part of the negotiated TLE process and the Province is now reviewing those selections. [As we noted earlier, Blueberry has also made several changes to the Red Creek selection over the years to accommodate for several other overlapping interests, such as a grazing licence and a woodlot. We acknowledge that the parcel configuration around the subdivision has raised concerns, and we are considering approaches that could help mitigate impacts, such as the buffer that has been proposed as a wind break and keeping the road corridor through the parcel as provincial Crown land.]

Speaker #12

Context: Member of the public. The Province has added additional information in the response below.

Question: There is vacant land only an eight-minute drive further north, on the Beatton Road, that could be suitable with less opposition. Could private land be considered instead of Crown?

Response: The provincial TLE settlement mandate is to provide Crown land, not private lands.

[Like anyone, Blueberry members can choose to purchase private lands at their discretion. We understand this question to be about a strong interest in continuing to access and use the Crown lands adjacent to the current subdivision for recreation. We are prepared to look at options, within negotiation timeframes, in a way that could meet both Blueberry's interests and public interests. While the provincial mandate does not include private lands, the Province has asked Blueberry to look at the lands identified by participants following the open house.]

In the Charlie Lake Open House on March 11th, a Blueberry representative also noted that Blueberry does not have much unencumbered Crown land left from which to choose.

Speaker #13

Context: Red Creek resident.

Question: How can we fee like we are properly represented, and we matter?

Response: You one hundred percent matter. We are hired as public servants to represent the interests of everyone in the whole province. Although we consider the well being and interests all of the people of British Columbia in our roles as public servants, we do not specifically represent each person individually. It is part of our job to consult and work with and listen to what you have to say. We need to understand your concerns and use the information we hear to make decisions.

Speaker # 14

Context: Member of the public.

Question: Can you be transparent and let us know what is happening in this process, including when and how things are happening?

Response: We have held several meetings with stakeholder representatives, [including Red Creek community representatives and have heard about interests and concerns at Red Creek.] We are holding this open house to listen and hear from residents and members of the public at large. We are also here to share what is happening, when and how. Now we need to take your comments, talk with Blueberry, and follow up. We hear that there needs to be better feedback.

Speaker #15

Context: Member of the public

Comment: Sees Blueberry identifying the land to be transferred to Canada as a done deal.

Response: The decision has not yet been made, and we are here to listen to you. We are following the Province's commitment to consult and engage with people and to try to sort out the issues.

Speaker # 16

Context: Red Creek resident.

Question: First, I am concerned that my property borders this land. How will you follow up with us – will you share a proposal before decisions are made, and how? Second, Blueberry's community is divided. We don't see reconciliation happening and we don't see this process bringing people together?

Response: There are a number of ways the Province can follow up with information and these include to post information to the website, share information with the Northeast Roundtable, and follow up directly with stakeholders who provide their contact information (you need to share your contact information for this reason). We cannot respond to e-mails on the Red Creek petition because of the *Freedom of Information and Privacy Act*.

Speaker #17

Context: Member of the Public.

Question: Would you accept community representatives in negotiations with Blueberry?

Response: The Province will work with Blueberry to consider next steps. We hear that we need follow up mechanisms. That does not mean stakeholders will be at the table in negotiations.

Speaker #18

Context: Member of Blueberry River first Nations. An immediate response was not provided; we have added a summary response below.

Question: Member asked if private lands that reflect traditional uses are available. Government should consider making the purchase of private lands willing seller/willing buyer a part of TLE. Elders' senate wants to go back to a traditional forum with Headmen.

Response: [As we have indicated, the Province is negotiating with Blueberry River First Nations elected Chief and Council to develop a mutually acceptable settlement package. We are committed to a transparent public engagement process so that all individuals and organizations potentially impacted by the land transfers can be heard. Blueberry River First Nations has its own governing body and is responsible to inform its members about TLE. The community must formally ratify the agreement package by way of a community vote, and most of the community members approval is required to approve the settlement.

While the provincial mandate does not include private lands, the Province has asked Blueberry to look at the lands identified by participants following the open house.]

Speaker #19

Context: Member of the public and Northeast Roundtable. The Province has added information to the response below.

Question: How can land reserved for public be included in TLE? The Charlie Lake watershed reserve was in place for 52 years and not available. His concern included that Sauleau has selected recreation areas and areas used by the public.

Response: Doug noted that the Province has asked First Nations to avoid specific areas, such as Provincial Parks as an interest, but not as an absolute criterion.

[As the Province noted at the Open House on March 11, 2020 for the Charlie Lake Parcels, the health of the lake and the watershed reserve that protects it are important to government, stakeholders, and Blueberry River First Nations. Protecting the lake and its environment will be priority considerations in any future land-use decisions.

There are some ways that the lake and watershed health can be assured in future. One is maintaining the watershed reserve in place as is. Another is to recommend an amendment to the watershed reserve which would need to be supported by information showing that any future development will be regulated, subject to strict environmental requirements, and undertaken in a manner that addresses the health of the lake and watershed.]

Speaker #20

Context: MLA Dan Davies commented.

Comment: People have no trust in government, with parcels being removed and then put back on the table, and with the Premier bringing on Blair Lekstrom to develop recommendations about caribou and then not accepting even one of his recommendations. There's a worry that this is just a checkbox; and that guarantees of meaningful engagement will be empty.

Response: Doug agreed that once trust is lost, it is very hard to rebuild, and trust is clearly lost here. Tell us how you (the people) would see trust being rebuilt. It's not enough to say it today. When we leave here, the proof will be in what happens next. We need to make it real.

Follow up comment: It will be hard to make up trust. Thank you to the public servants for being here tonight and I know you're in a hard position between the politics and making recommendations. Moving forward is a big job. How government manages TLE could set precedence for other land transfers around the province. (Dan Davies)

Follow up comment: We want to build trust and keep lines of communication open. Please copy me on all follow up e-mails about the Red Creek parcel. (Joyce Smith)

Speaker #21

Context: Member of the Public. An immediate provincial response was not provided; we have added a summary response below.

Comment: We see having Blueberry members here as helping to bring people together against the parcel. What alternate lands could be available? Buying private lands could help bring people together.

Response: [As we noted, the Province continues to be open to working with Blueberry if they are interested in finding suitable alternate land. We are working within the mandate for selecting Crown lands, and it is very hard to find land that is not already constrained by other legal interests. The alternative lands process could allow for some changes to parcels (for example where a provincial road is excluded from the parcel).]

Deane Strongitharm noted that Blueberry has supported the Red Creek parcel over multiple councils, who have visited the parcels. Blueberry sees this parcel as meeting their interests in community development. The parcel is close to the Alaska Highway and to Fort St. John but still rural. They are looking at development similar to the Red Creek subdivision. A lot of Crown land in the area is alienated (taken up by things like licences and tenures), so it is hard to find suitable parcels.

Follow-up: We will vote no; I see 60% of Blueberry wanting a change. (Clarence Apsassin)

Follow-up: Will government accept if the ratification vote by Blueberry fails?

Response: If Blueberry does not ratify their TLE Settlement, then the parties will need to go back to the negotiation table to find a deal that works. We still have a legal obligation to finalize the land transfers and settle Treaty Land Entitlement fully and finally.

The session ended past the 9:00 p.m. time, and the provincial team did not capture specific wrap up comments and next steps from the evening. The following section has been added to provide a summary as well as to capture any actions and follow-up.

6.0 Summary

The following outlines the provincial team's summary of key messages and the Province's next steps. We have summarized the comments that are frequently raised, but not every comment from the evening is included here.

We have heard from stakeholders and the public that it is important to maintain access for a variety of recreational uses of the Crown lands around the subdivision.

As we noted earlier in the question and answers, we have heard how special the area around Red Creek is to the people who live there. The Province has undertaken a public engagement process to fully understand the interests as part of assessing the proposed land for transfer, and we are looking at how to balance a variety of interests in recommendations for decision. Other factors being considered include the unfulfilled promises made under Treaty 8 over 100 years ago, previous *Land Act* designations for future development, and acknowledging that Blueberry made several changes to the Red Creek selection over the years to accommodate for other overlapping interests. Ultimately, we have a legal obligation to settle TLE as much as possible in a way that balances the interests we are hearing from the public and Blueberry's interests.

Action: We will follow up with options that consider the various interests within the Crown land adjacent to the subdivision and mitigate concerns, so that they can be considered as part of the decision making on the transfer the Red Creek parcel.

We have heard people ask whether other lands could meet Blueberry River First Nations' interests in the general area near Red Creek.

As we have noted, the Province continues to be open to working with Blueberry if they are interested in finding suitable alternative land. We are working within the internal government approvals that Crown lands be selected to meet the Treaty Land Entitlement, and it is very hard to find land that is not already constrained by other legal interests. There is an alternative lands process that could allow for some changes to parcels (for example where a provincial road is excluded from the parcel).

Action: If alternative Crown lands nearby met with Blueberry River First Nations' interests, the Province would be open to exploring further. However, Blueberry has expressed strong reasons for the current Red Creek selection, and we will consider options that include ways the parcel could transfer to Blueberry and address the concerns of all parties.

We have heard that there are concerns from some Blueberry River First Nations members that the Blueberry community may not be fully supportive of all the TLE parcels.

The Provincial government is in government-to-government negotiations with the legally elected Blueberry River First Nations Chief and Council. We acknowledge that since the time of this open house, the Blueberry River First Nations' leadership has come internally into dispute. While the Province continues to work with the elected Chief and Council's appointed

representatives, we anticipate that this matter would be resolved by the time an agreement would be ready to finalize.

Action: We have followed up with the Chief and Council to confirm that the full Chief and Council support the TLE parcels. Blueberry's Chief and Council have provided a Band Council Resolution (BCR) signed by the Chief of Blueberry River First Nations and all five councillors supporting the TLE selections.

We have heard clearly that people are concerned about how their comments and questions will be considered and used to inform a decision.

Stakeholder engagement is a critical part of the work that we do in this ministry. Before finalizing the Settlement and Lands Agreements, it is important all stakeholders and the public provide input and express concerns and interests. All feedback will be taken into consideration as we move forward on the decision-making process, which will reflect a balanced assessment of the overall risks, interests and values.

Action: We will reach out to the smaller groups and individuals you have designated as your spokespersons to follow up and where possible we may share potential options that are being considered.

Action: We are committed to reporting out to stakeholders and the public about any decisions made with respect to the land transfers via the govTogether website (<https://engage.gov.bc.ca/govtogetherbc/consultation/land-transfers-in-northeast-british-columbia/>) and the Northeast Roundtable.