

For thousands of years people have left their marks along the Harrison River

PRESS RELEASE

HARRISON HOT SPRINGS, BC
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EXPLORER - CHEHALIS RE- DISCOVER PREHISTORIC CAVE AT HARRISON

Working together with the Chehalis First Nation and Salamander's Eco Tours, international explorer, Mr. Robi Smith, has re-discovered a significant archaeological site along the Harrison river that has been lost from the Sts'ailes (Chehalis) First Nation for about a century.

Using clues from a number of sources, the Salamander's Eco Tour guides and Mr. Smith, used their experience to locate the cave which was used by Canada's first inhabitants.

In an effort to share their proud history and to educate to public of their long ties to the Harrison area, Chief Alex Paul of the Sts'ailes (Chehalis) First Nation and Tim Pippus, Lead Interpreter of Salamander's Eco Tours, have agreed to work cooperatively. Salamander's Eco Tours provides guided tours of the Harrison river, interpreting the rich history of the Harrison, including: modern history of the Harrison, identifying the river wildlife, and visiting select ancient archaeological sites and other features documented by anthropologists over the century.

Chief Alex Paul was quoted saying,

"This cave on the Harrison River is not unknown to my people. Our elders have talked about it for years, not only to us, but to professionals, like historian Rueben Ware, linguist Brent Galloway, and others. It has also been noted in our traditional use studies. We're glad the cave has been located. But we have concerns about too much public access, until the cave has been assessed by archaeologists and until our cultural leaders have discussed the matter. There are numerous heritage sites along the Harrison River and elsewhere throughout our traditional territory. All are important to us. Our primary concern is that these special places are treated with respect."

Gordon Mohs, Heritage policy consultant for the Sts'ailes (Chehalis) First Nation, noted author and respected Coast Salish archaeologist was quoted saying, "We have carbon-14 dated cultural deposits at the mouth of the Harrison river going back 7,200 years. And if there were people living at the mouth at that time, there were people living up here [at Chehalis] as well."

Hidden away in the rainforest, the cave site features a rock passageway, and low cave entrance. Inside the cave there is a small standing-height room with a firepit and a flat-topped rock in the center, and a lesser-height ante room to the rear; a natural rock chimney allowed the smoke to exit above the roof of the cavern. The total depth of the cave

from opening to rear is about 25 feet. One can see the remains of a rock wall near the opening of the cave which was possibly used as a windbreak.

To officially recognize the culturally-important cave site, Chief Alex Paul sent a delegation of the Sts'ailes (Chehalis) First Nation: Gary Leon, Bev Blaine, Councillor Boyd Peters, Kelsey Charlie and James S. Leon. Matthew Lynam, on behalf of the Harrison Resort and Spa, attended the occasion. Nicole Hoepfner and Tim Pippus of Salamander's Eco Tours guided the group to the cave site with their motor-powered, 14-passenger canoe.

The Sts'ailes (Chehalis) First Nation representatives performed a small ceremony while Salamander's Eco Tours and Harrison Resort and Spa officials gave witness to the event. And in a spontaneous act, the Sts'ailes gathered in the cave and sang songs likely as old as those sung centuries ago by the ancestors who used this cave.

The Sts'ailes (Chehalis) First Nation has begun recording the site details and intends a preliminary archaeological assessment of the site. Salamander's Eco Tours is working cooperatively with them to protect, preserve and educate visitors about the heritage sites and natural heritage wonders of the Harrison river.

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