

**Fraser Valley Treaty Advisory Committee
First Nations Media Monitor - Excerpts
December 24, 2008**

*Summary of news events reported on First Nations, Aboriginal communities, and rights & title issues.
This report can also be found on the FVTAC website at the following link:*

<http://www.fvrd.com/About%20the%20FVRD/FraserValleyTreatyAdvisoryCommittee/Pages/Reports.aspx>

AROUND THE PROVINCE

Tribes Wants Crown Land Left Alone

Cowichan Tribes is considering seeking an injunction to prevent the development plans for a village at Paldi following its recent approval by the Cowichan Valley Regional District (CVRD). Cowichan Tribes is also hoping to persuade the B.C. Integrated Land Management Bureau not to allow a sewage treatment plant and water system to be built on Crown land, which is currently on the table as potential treaty settlement land. Tribes Chief Lydia Hwitsum said they are concerned that important cultural practices in the area would be affected by the \$100-million development, which will include 500 residential units and a commercial area. Cowichan Tribes plans to meet with Agriculture and Lands Minister Stan Hagen as soon as possible. Former CVRD chairman Jack Peake said the project would require the development on Crown land and noted that CVRD would own and operate the sewage treatment system.

(Times Colonist, December 7)

Matsqui Members Protest at Band Office

A group of protesters, called MFN Strong Voice, gathered in front of the Matsqui First Nation (MFN) band office to protest the state of housing on the reserve. Protest organizer Shawnee McKay said there have been no new houses built in the 10 years that Chief Alice McKay has been in office and the houses that do exist are substandard. Strong Voice believes the chief and council are not sending in the proposals necessary to receive funding from Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC) and they sent council a list of questions about the housing programs, funding, and band money but received no response. Chief McKay agrees there is a lack of housing on the reserve and said the council has been in negotiations and talks with INAC but have yet to receive the go-ahead for a planned sub-division. She also noted that the council did receive a letter signed "members of Matsqui First Nation" but has never met the group of 15 to 20 protesters face to face and doesn't "know who they are."

(Abbotsford News, December 9)

TREATIES

Province Adds Land to Tla'Amin Treaty Offer

The provincial government's latest proposal in its treaty negotiations with the Tla'Amin First Nation (TFN) includes the addition of the Lund Hotel property as part of treaty settlement lands. TFN already owns 51 per cent of the property and has previously stated they would not sign off on a final agreement if it did not include the remaining lands. The property was not included in the 2001 or 2003 agreement-in-principle, but after reviewing the situation, which includes Tla'Amin's commitment to harmonize land-use planning with the Lund Official Community Plan and guaranteeing public access, B.C.'s chief negotiator decided the transfer would not be of "great impact on the community of Lund." However, the Powell River Regional District (PRRD) does not support the addition of the land to the treaty settlement and during a recent public information session held by the province concerns were raised regarding loss of taxes to PRRD.

(Powell River Peak, December 3)

Chehalis and In-SHUCK-ch Discuss Border Issues

Since September, the In-SHUCK-ch treaty team and the Chehalis First Nation have met several times in an attempt to resolve an outstanding border dispute over the region around Harrison Lake. The In-SHUCK-ch are close to a final agreement with the provincial and federal governments that includes several areas around the lake and Fire Creek, which are also being claimed by the Chehalis. Chehalis say they have archaeological, cultural and oral evidence of their people's occupation of the area, but neither side is willing to relinquish their claim.

(St'at'imc Runner, December 2008)

FORESTS

Bands File for Review of Timber Transfer

The Kamloops and Skeetchestn Indian Bands have filed joint papers, under the title Stk'emlupsemc of the Secwepemc Nation, asking for a judicial review on the Minister of Forests and Range Pat Bell's apparent decision to allow a timber transfer between Weyerhaeuser and Interfor without consulting or accommodating the bands. The area in question is Tree Farm Licence 35, which is located within the traditional territories of the bands. However, Bell said the challenge is premature as the transfer is still pending and he insists that the process has been consultative within legal requirements. Chief Keith Matthew of the Simpcw First Nation said his band has a significant interest in the transfer also as their traditional territory makes up about 70 per cent of the Weyerhaeuser timber holdings. Simpcw is currently in private discussions with both companies, but has not ruled out legal action as an option.

(Kamloops Daily News, December 9; North Thompson Times, December 15)

Okanagan Band Vows to Fight for Aboriginal Title

The Okanagan Indian Band (OIB) is disappointed with the Supreme Court of Canada's decision not to hear their appeal on a B.C. Court of Appeal order relating to logging in their traditional territory. OIB say they are committed to "fight for recognition of our Aboriginal title" despite the legal setback. The case began in 1999 when band members logged in the Browns Creek area based on what they saw as their Aboriginal rights. The Ministry of Forests issued a stop-work order and commenced legal action against the band. There have been various court decisions in favour of both parties, but the B.C. Court of Appeal decision allows the province to deal with rights issues prior to land title issues.

(Vernon Morning Star, December 7)

LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Smudging Ceremony Removes Negative Energy for New Mayor and Council

The recent inaugural meeting of Dawson Creek's new council and mayor also featured the first smudging ceremony in the council's history. New councillor Theresa Gladue is Dawson Creek's first councillor with Aboriginal heritage and suggested the council include the ceremony. Mayor Mike Bernier made the official motion to allow the smudging ceremony after he was sworn in and Aboriginal elder Louis Isadore conducted the ceremony designed to cleanse negative energy.

(Dawson Creek Daily News, December 2)

New PIB Chief Addresses Local Politicians

During his speech at a Rotary Club meeting, the Penticton Indian Band's (PIB) newly elected Chief Jonathan Kruger indicated his band's desire to form new partnerships with the City of Penticton and the Regional District of Okanagan-Similkameen, and then asked four new local government officials present to relay their ideas for building new relationships. Kruger also talked about PIB's plan to start working on a new growth strategy in 2009.

(Penticton Herald, December 4)