

## **Fraser Valley Treaty Advisory Committee First Nations Media Monitor - Excerpts December 31, 2010**

*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/AboutUs/FVTAC/Pages/Reports.aspx>

### AFN Chiefs to Lead by Example

On December 14, First Nations chiefs at the Assembly of First Nations (AFN) passed a resolution to “lead by example” by reaffirming their commitment to transparent and accountable decision-making within their communities. This includes clear and timely access to salaries, honoraria and expenses. AFN National Chief Shawn A-in-chut Atleo said the move demonstrates that First Nations across the country believe in accountability and dealing with issues head on, despite recent unfounded and alarmist attacks by critics. Chief Robert Louie said that the Westbank First Nation has been making band chief and council salaries public in legal documentation since 2006. Louie also noted that First Nation’s council salaries cannot be compared to municipal council salaries because band chief and councils are not population-based, in addition to regular government duties members sit on dozens of band company boards, and they also deal with real estate, corporate ventures, forestry matters and provincial and federal issues. Tk’emlups Indian Band Chief Shane Gottfriedson supports the resolution saying there is a lot of misunderstanding about what First Nations leaders do and full disclosure could help put an end to the controversy.

*(Kelowna Capital News, December 19; Kamloops This Week, December 22)*

### St’at’imc Nations Start Ratification Process on Hydro Deal

BC Hydro is in the process of finalizing a \$210-million settlement with 11 tribes of the St’at’imc Nation whose traditional territory has been traversed by power lines for about 60 years without compensation. Decades ago when BC Hydro, then called B.C. Electric, began installing transmission lines they made agreements with First Nations to provide them with electricity. That never happened and the communities have since had to rely on diesel-fuelled generators for power. Four St’at’imc communities were recently connected to the power grid for the first time. The settlement is part of the St’at’imc Hydro Agreement to resolve historical grievances with negotiations beginning in 1993 after the formation of the St’at’imc Chiefs Council. The payments will be in one set of annual installments for 50 years and another installment for 100 years. The funds will be put into a trust fund for all the St’at’imc communities and divided into five sectors – culture, education, economic development, health and administration. Agreements have been initialed and now information will be presented to the 11 communities to vote on whether or not to accept them. *(Pique News Magazine, December 23)*

### Mining Minister Offers Apology to Chief

B.C.'s Minister of State and Mining Randy Hawes offered a public apology to West Moberly First Nations Chief Roland Willson regarding statements Hawes made following the release of a Harvard study on the effects of B.C. mining on First Nations. The report concluded that B.C. mining laws favoured industry and "deny First Nations an effective means to have a say in what happens to their land." Hawes publicly dismissed the report and at the same time suggested that the traditional lifestyles of First Nation communities that chose to reject mining were to blame for the social challenges they are facing. Willson recently refused to attend a meeting that included Hawes, saying he had "no intention of being in the same room" as him. Hawes still dismisses the report as "hogwash" but has now admitted that he may have used poorly chosen wording. "I shouldn't have used the word traditional" but rather should have said that there are "First Nations in B.C. who's current lifestyles lead to these very adverse social outcomes," said Hawes. (*Chetwynd Echo, December 10*)

### Band Signs New Forest Agreement

The Sts'ailes (formerly the Chehalis Indian Band) has signed a Forest Consultation and Revenue Sharing Agreement with the province. This new type of agreement is based on forestry activity within the band's traditional territory and replaces the previous forest and range opportunity agreements, which were based on a community's population. The three-year agreement provides Sts'ailes with a percentage of revenue from harvesting activities to be paid semi-annually. The band will receive \$332,029 in the first year of the agreement, but this amount could increase as the forest industry rebounds in the future.

(*Ministry of Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation / Sts'ailes – News Release, December 17*)

### Protest Fishermen Fines Average \$200

The fines handed down in B.C. Provincial Court to more than 40 commercial fishermen, found guilty of holding illegal protest fisheries in 2001 and 2002, averaged at about \$200 each. The fishermen said they were protesting unequal rules governing Aboriginal fisheries. Phil Eidsvik, B.C. Fisheries Survival Coalition spokesman and one of the convicted protesters, said many would appeal the conviction. The fishermen have been given six months to pay but some say they would rather go to jail than pay the fine. Also among the convicted is conservative MP John Cummins, who received a fine of \$300 because it was his second offence. There have been several failed legal challenges over the years by commercial fishermen to try and force the Department of Fisheries and Oceans to apply "equal legal treatment" to Aboriginal fisheries. Instead, other recent court rulings have strengthened the constitutionally protected Aboriginal right to fish for food, social and ceremonial purposes. (*South Delta Leader, December 24*)

### District Gets Bill from First Nation for Strategy Input

Following a call for input on a regional growth strategy from adjacent jurisdictions, the North Okanagan Regional District (NORD) received invoices for providing comments from the Splots'in First Nation (SFN). NORD is required to make other jurisdictions aware of issues of interest and to solicit feedback, but have no legal obligation to provide funding to First Nations for referrals. The district was unsuccessful with its attempt to have the provincial government cover the invoices and were told by the community development minister to inform SFN that "neighbouring jurisdictions respond to referrals in kind (no charge)." NORD is still interested in

hearing Splats'in's concerns, but without having to pay for it. The district is seeking assistance from the province on determining the best way to exchange information with First Nations and would like to establish a protocol on co-operation. (*Morning Star, December 29*)

### Sto:lo People Still Divided Over Child Services

On December 17, an agreement was signed giving the new Fraser Valley Aboriginal Children and Family Services Society control over child protection services for Sto:lo communities. However, the communities are still divided on their support for the new society. In 2004, controversy over the running of the Xyolhmeylh agency led to the political break up of the Sto:lo First Nation into the Sto:lo Nation (SN) and the Sto:lo Tribal Council (STC). Since 2007, an independent board has been working with the Ministry of Children and Family Development to create a new governance structure for the delivery of services. STC president Grand Chief Clarence Pennier said nothing has changed and "few in our community support" the new society. Aboriginal children are still being placed in non-Aboriginal foster homes, said Pennier. Seabird Island chief and council did not show up for the official signing and said that they did now want to be part of the new organization. Seabird passed a resolution stating their preference to continue receiving services from the ministry. However, Chief Joe Hall, of the Sto:lo Nation, said cultural traditions play a key role in the programs being delivered by the new board, which has done an "excellent job" of creating a non-political agency. Gerard Peters, treaty negotiator for the In-SHUCK-ch First Nations said critics should give the new agency at least six months to prove itself before making any judgments. We haven't even taken back the authority that the ministry removed in 2007, said Peters. SN represents 10 bands with about 2,000 people, STC represents approximately 3,000 people in eight bands, and there are six independent bands consisting of more than 1,000 people.

(*Globe and Mail, December 23; Chilliwack Progress, December 28*)

### B.C. Aboriginal Language Programs Get Additional Funding

The federal government announced plans to quadruple funds to programs in British Columbia designed to revitalize Aboriginal languages. The goal is to save and preserve as many of the 30 Aboriginal languages currently close to extinction within the next five years. Funding will be provided under a national program, which receives \$5-million annually. Because B.C. is the most linguistically diverse province, home to 60 per cent of Canada's Aboriginal languages, the formula for distribution is being changed so that B.C. will receive \$834,000 next year compared to this year's \$232,000. The increased funding will go toward recording and digitizing Aboriginal speakers, creating instructional DVD's for schools, and sponsoring language camps for youth. The First Peoples' Heritage, Language and Culture Council on Vancouver Island recently developed and launched FirstVoices Mobile, a new language application for the iPod Touch, iPad and iPhone. The Sencoten and Halq'emeylem languages are the first to be presented through this popular technology, which targets young First Nations and those living off reserves. With the additional funding, there are plans to expand the number of languages available through mobile applications.

(*Globe and Mail, December 21; Peninsula News Review, December 29*)