

**Fraser Valley Treaty Advisory Committee
First Nations Media Monitor - Excerpts
April 18, 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

Lil'wat Land-Use Agreement Protects Key Areas

The Lil'wat First Nation and the provincial government have unveiled their land-use agreement for the Sea to Sky region, which includes the creation of six new conservancies covering about 39,000 hectares at Callaghan, 100 Lakes Plateau, Upper Soo, Upper Birkenhead, Twin Two, and Cerise creeks. The conservancies will protect biological and culturally significant areas where industrial logging, mining, hydroelectric development, new roads, and commercial development will be forbidden, but allows for future "acceptable uses" agreed on by both parties. The agreement also includes: the protection of 59 Lil'wat "spirited ground areas" such as village sites, archaeological sites, spiritual places, gathering areas, campsites and traditional training areas; the creation of new environmentally sensitive and old-growth management areas; about 204,000 hectares of wildland zones, which will allow for mining, commercial recreation and tourism; 47,000 hectares of cultural management areas within the provincial timber harvesting land base; and the extension of Duffey Lake Provincial Park from 2,095 hectares to 4,048 hectares.

(Vancouver Sun, April 12)

Tribal Council Updates Members

The Lillooet Tribal Council (LTC) Capacity Initiative Project (CIP) is close to completion, following a series of seminars planned for each LTC community. The first CIP seminar, From the Past to the Future: Changing Traditions, Preserving Culture, was held last February at Cayoose. The goal of the seminars is to update the affiliated communities on the work that has been done in documenting St'at'imc land and resource use by LTC over the past four years. The Capacity Initiative is the foundation process in developing the St'at'imc Land Use Plan, the St'at'imc Land and Resource Code, and the St'at'imc Tribal Code. LTC is seeking input from community members that will be essential for the implementation stage.

(St'at'imc Runner, March 2008)

Some Tsawwassen Members Voice Concern

Delta-Richmond East MP John Cummins said he has been asked by some members of the Tsawwassen First Nation (TFN) to forward their concerns about the TFN land use plan to the Minister of Indian Affairs. Cummins said the band members, many of whom live off-reserve, are wanting to know who will be allowed to vote on what's included in the plan, and are concerned that some could be forced off land held by their families for generations. Chief Kim Baird said the plan is still in the preliminary stages and TFN council has been holding band member meetings to hear concerns and questions and to get feedback from the community. Baird said three options are being considered, each involving commercial, industrial and residential uses, and noted that all band members are able to vote on all matters.

(Delta Optimist, March 19)

ACROSS THE NATION

AFN Critical of New Audit Policy

The Assembly of First Nations (AFN) has issued a statement criticizing the new Indian Affairs policy where all transfers of funds to band and tribal councils will contain a clause that allows the department to audit the spending of the money. The audits will report on whether bands have appropriate management, financial, and administrative controls, but according to the AFN the new policy plays on the false impressions about First Nations and accountability. However, National Chief Patrick Brazeau of the Congress of Aboriginal Peoples, which represents off-reserve Aboriginals, said a cross-country canvass of Aboriginal people found widespread frustration with First Nations leaders. Brazeau argues that the AFN is run by First Nations chiefs who resist accountability and hopes the new policy will bring about improvements.

(Globe and Mail, April 3)

Paper Suggest Aboriginals Leave Reserves

A new paper from the Winnipeg-based Frontier Centre for Public Policy suggests that Aboriginal people would be more successful if they moved off reserves. The report notes that people living on-reserve earn less and face deeper social problems, such as alcoholism, domestic abuse and suicide. Author Joseph Quesnel used information from a study analyzing the lifestyles of indigenous people in Canada, Australia, New Zealand and the United States. Quesnel also suggests that improvements to the land-claims process would provide First Nations with access to more land and resources to use as leverage to improve the conditions of their communities. Jacqueline Romanow, the acting director of the Aboriginal Governance Program at the University of Winnipeg, agreed with the papers findings saying that Aboriginal people do better off-reserve because they have more access to opportunities, resources and education. However, special advisor to the Assembly of First Nations Dan Wilson is worried that the Frontier Centre has a “right-wing agenda” and is trying to convince Canadians that First Nations people must abandon the reserve system and assimilate.

(CBC News, April 11)

Feds Stall Human Rights Bill

The federal government has stalled a human rights bill, which would give Aboriginal people full rights and protections under the Human Rights Act by allowing them to make formal complaints against band councils or Ottawa. Government House Leader Peter Van Loan said changes made by opposition MP's have “gutted” the bill and the government is studying the amendments. Changes include several clauses to protect First Nations' traditional relationships to their lands and communities and a three-year transition period for education and preparation, which Aboriginal leaders had requested.

(Canadian Press, April 11)

TREATIES

Treaty Commission Report to Help First Nations

A new publication by the B.C. Treaty Commission, called *The Day After Treaty*, is designed to help First Nations through the treaty process. The report was developed by the commission following a three-day forum attended by First Nations leaders, lawyers, and experienced treaty negotiators. Nelson Leeson, president of the Nisga'a Lisims Government, was a keynote speaker at the forum and, along with other First Nations leaders with treaties, agreed that implementation is challenging, but has been the right decision for his people. Leeson also noted that the hardest part in treaties is not the preparation of the agreement, but rather the day after signing.

(Prince Rupert Daily News, April 2)

FOREST

First Nations and Resort Partner in Community Forest

The partnership of the Squamish and Lil'wat First Nations and the Resort Municipality of Whistler (RMW) have been invited by B.C.'s Minister of Forests and Range to submit an application for a Probationary Community Forest Agreement. If accepted, the partnership would develop an eco-forestry plan for an annual allowable cut of 20,000 cubic metres of timber for a five-year term. After the initial term, the ministry would review the partnership's practices before considering whether to issue a long-term permit of 25 to 99 years. Along with selective logging, the primary goal of the First Nations and RMW is local control over the management and protection of the Whistler area forest eco-system, such as wildlife habitat, viewsapes, watersheds, and Aboriginal cultural values.

(Whistler Question, March 20)

LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Penticton Chief Pleased With District's Decision

Grand Chief Stewart Phillip, of the Penticton Indian Band (PIB), is pleased with the Summerland district council's decision to defer talks with Summerland Hills Golf Resort developers until land consultations between the province and the band are completed. Mayor David Gregory said the municipality was told by the province that the consultations could last for up to five years. The proposed development project area contains about 50 per cent Crown land and borders PIB's territory and Summerland council was concerned about finalizing any development agreement before seeing the outcome of the land process. The district rejected the option for concurrent discussions and Phillip agreed that two-tracked negotiations were not a possibility.

(Penticton Western News, March 28)

EDITORIAL EDITS

Vancouver Sun, April 15 – Grand Chief Edward John (First Nations Summit political executive) wrote, in part:

“When Mike Harcourt was premier in the 1990s, he was part of the New Democratic Party government that arbitrarily set a policy ceiling on the land quantum for treaty negotiations – specifically, the five-per-cent land-selection model.

Since Harcourt's mea culpa was offered, he's been reluctant to own up to his role in creating the problems that continue to plague treaty negotiations. Instead, he deflects blame onto First Nations who, by the way, have been forced to take out treaty loans in excess of \$315-million only to face intransigent government negotiators who come to the table without the mandates necessary to break impasses over land and other key issues.

To rightfully address the challenges facing the treaty negotiation process, reconciliation measures are in order. True negotiations can occur only when both sides of the table come without preconceived and predetermined outcomes. First Nations remain at the negotiation table waiting patiently for government to deliver on this point.

The other unfortunate, costly and time-consuming option to resolve this impasse will be for First Nations to continue looking to the courts and international bodies as an alternative to negotiations and a means of seeking relief from fundamentally anachronistic, colonialist and offensive Crown policies.

That is why we reject Harcourt's message to British Columbians, that the land question in B.C. can only be answered if First Nations get 'real' and drop 'the myths and BS.'”

The Province, April 18 – Joey Thompson wrote, in part:

“Canadians will soon be getting details of the multibillion-dollar yearly spending sprees by aboriginal chiefs and elders.

That is, if the Conservatives don't wimp out on their latest promise to audit the nation's band councils.

It's only fair, after all, that those running Canada's 618 bands are held to the level of cost accountability as other government-funded agencies, given natives polish off nearly \$10 billion a year in taxpayer-fuelled federal transfer payments.

The politically fired Assembly of First Nations opposes Indian Affairs Minister Chuck Strahl's plan to adopt a policy come July that allows Ottawa to check their expenditures to ensure the bucks are well-spent. Native groups in B.C. and other provinces are threatening to gum up the works with protests for several reasons, including the beef with the feds over the looming audits.

In 2003, Liberal Indian Affairs Minister Robert Nault's First Nations Governance Act was a master plan aimed at ending the abuse of power on reserves. But aboriginal leaders would have none of it, so the spineless Paul Martin nixed it.

Canadians, First Nations citizens among them, are fed up with the whining about a lack of funds for education, housing and health. They have a right to say, no more, until there is a full and frank disclosure of shopping habits.

If the Tories score a majority in the next election, they'd be wise to stickhandle deeper reforms to native governance. Changes that will enable reserve residents to own property and make investments.

Natives also need a means to challenge allegations of band abuse of power, corruption or misspending. A native ombudsman with independent investigatory authority would be a good start.”