

**Fraser Valley Treaty Advisory Committee  
First Nations Media Monitor - Excerpts  
February 8, 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.bc.ca/FVRD/About+the+FVRD/0\\_Fraser+Valley+Treaty+Advisory+Committee/4\\_Reports.htm](http://www.fvrd.bc.ca/FVRD/About+the+FVRD/0_Fraser+Valley+Treaty+Advisory+Committee/4_Reports.htm)

## AROUND THE PROVINCE

### **New Cowichan Tribes Chief Aims for Self-Government**

Lydia Hwitsum was elected as chief of the Cowichan Tribes on December 3. Hwitsum was first elected chief in 1997, but stepped down after two terms in 2001. Since being elected again she has orchestrated a meeting with School District 79 employees and trustees to work together in supporting aboriginal students. Another goal of Hwitsum's is to help Tribes establish its own constitution and work toward developing its own government structure.

*(Cowichan Pictorial, January 27)*

### **Band and Feds Sign MOU to Protect Pacific Rim Reserves**

The Ucluelet First Nation and the federal government have signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) to ensure the long-term protection of the band's Reserves No. 8 and No. 9. The agreement prohibits development in these two areas located inside the Pacific Rim National Park Reserve, and also helps guarantee the integrity of the park. In exchange, Ucluelet will be provided with 29 hectares of land outside of the park, which the band will be able to utilize for economic development.

*(Alberni Valley News, January 25)*

## TREATIES

### **Ditidaht File Suit Against Maa-nulth Treaty**

The Ditidaht First Nation (DFN) has filed a civil action suit in B.C. Supreme Court naming the provincial and federal governments, the five First Nations of the Maa-nulth Treaty, Western Forest Products, and Teal Cedar Products as defendants. The Ditidaht are claiming the Maa-nulth Treaty infringes on some of their territories and rights and B.C. and Canada failed to deal with the issue "honourably and fairly." The band is also seeking "exclusive Aboriginal title to not only the area of infringement...but a substantial portion of the West Coast Trail in Pacific Rim National Park Reserve, along with the Carmanah Walbran Provincial Parks." Chief Robert Dennis of the Hwitsum First Nation (HFN), a Maa-nulth member, said he knew the Ditidaht, whose territory is adjacent to HFN's, were preparing for litigation. Dennis said that the two bands had a shared-territory agreement in place, but DFN terminated the agreement with no notice and no discussion last August.

*(Times Colonist, January 22; Alberni Valley Times, January 23)*

## **Governments Agree to Common Table**

Following a week of meetings, the federal and provincial governments have agreed, with the B.C. Treaty Commission, to committing \$400,000 toward a common treaty table process for B.C.'s First Nations. There are currently 58 First Nations involved in the treaty process with 48 separate negotiations taking place. The majority of these are still in stage four of the six-stage process and only seven have signed agreements-in-principle. In 2006, frustration with the process led to 46 First Nations signing the Unity Protocol, which called for the creation of a common voice for negotiators to deal with six key barriers to treaty signing: certainty, constitutional status of treaty lands, governance, taxation, resource and lands management, and fisheries.

*(Cowichan News-Leader, January 23)*

## **FOREST**

### **Forest Industry Opposes First Nations Resource Plan**

The Strategic Land and Resource Plan (SLRP) currently being pursued by four Sunshine Coast First Nations and the provincial government is meeting opposition from the Sechelt Community Forest (SCF). SCF recently added its name to a letter from International Forest Products (Interfor) Sechelt division, along with other signatories Terminal Forest Products, Western Forest Products, and Weyerhaeuser Hardwoods Timberlands Division. The letter, to Agriculture and Lands Minister Pat Bell, states that the companies will only support the SLRP if the forest sector representation increases from one to three members, and also requests no reduction in timber harvest land, no interim measures while the SLRP is implemented, and no adoption of ecosystem-based management.

*(Coast Reporter, January 11)*

## **LOCAL GOVERNMENT**

### **Metro Vancouver Said First Nations Objections Ended Landfill Plan**

Despite efforts by some First Nations leaders to persuade the local government to give landfills another look, Metro Vancouver is still set to abandon its plan to develop a new landfill in B.C.'s interior. Metro cited Aboriginal resistance of previous proposals to either expand the Cache Creek dump or build a new landfill at Ashcroft Ranch or Highland Valley Copper's mine near Logan Lake as their reason for opting to export garbage to the U.S. over the short term. Logan Lake Mayor Ella Brown said First Nations don't oppose a landfill at Highland Valley and accused Metro of using First Nations as a "scapegoat" for its decision. Cook's Ferry First Nation Chief David Walkum acknowledged that the band did not support the Ashcroft plan, but had strong interest in the Highland Valley proposal. A Highland Valley spokesman said 17 First Nations were consulted and the company hasn't received any formal notices of rejection from any of them.

*(Vancouver Sun, January 25; Abbotsford News, January 26; Kamloops Daily News, January 28)*

### **Districts Support Akisqnuq's Grant Application**

The Akisqnuq First Nation has received letters of support from the Regional District of East Kootenay, the District of Invermere, and the Ktunaxa Tribal Council as part of its grant application to the B.C. Capacity Initiative. Akisqnuq is seeking funding to develop a guideline on future growth planning for its reserve lands. Along with letters of support, the application process also requires in-kind assistance being offered from local government representatives.

*(Valley Echo, January 30)*

## EDITORIAL EDITS

### **Penticton Herald, January 18 – Editorial, in part:**

“Chief Stewart Phillip’s comments Wednesday that the Penticton Indian Band wants to take over taxation authority for non-native residential developments on its land must have Redwing and Skaha Lake manufactured home park residents concerned.

It’s a natural fit for the band. Increased autonomy over its own affairs and its own land has long been lauded as the best way for the band to solve its economic difficulties.

But in the same article in Thursday’s Penticton Herald, Phillip said the 2006 population census is significantly inaccurate, excusing his band’s lack of participation with Statistics Canada because it views itself a sovereign indigenous people.

An under-participation in the census is hardly the way to establish a relationship of trust – and in taking over taxation authority of the West Bench and Skaha Lake areas, trust is exactly what the band is asking for.

When the band seeks to take over taxation authority for the two areas, it will be asking those residents to trust the numbers they present for the cost of the services it provides.

If the band is unwilling to open its membership up to Statistics Canada, can West Bench or Skaha Lake trust the band will open its taxation structure to public scrutiny?

The way any government earns public trust is through transparency and accountability. A lack of participation in the census is neither.”

### ***Graham Bruce, Former Mayor of North Cowichan and Provincial Government Minister,***

### ***During a speech to the Ladysmith Chamber of Commerce on the racial divide between First Nations and non-First Nations in the area:***

“When you actually step back, it’s a huge dark cloud and it’s across our society and our community.

What we did was we took the land, then we took the kids, then we took the culture. And then we turned around, and said get over it.”

*(Ladysmith-Chemainus Chronicle, January 22)*