



NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release
2007OTP0183-001493
Nov. 21, 2007

Office of the Premier
Ministry of Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation

TREATY BUILDS FUTURE FOR FIVE FIRST NATIONS

VICTORIA – Premier Gordon Campbell welcomed chiefs, Ha’wiih (hereditary chiefs) and community members from the five Maa-nulth First Nations today to celebrate the introduction of legislation for Vancouver Island’s first modern-day treaty.

“This treaty legislation marks a major step forward for the Maa-nulth First Nations and for all British Columbians on our shared journey towards self-determination, prosperity, and reconciliation,” said Campbell. “The treaty will provide opportunity for economic development and help revitalize a growing and dynamic culture. It provides a firm foundation for the full expression of the Maa-nulth peoples’ talents and fulfilment of their aspirations.”

The Maa-nulth First Nations are Ucluelet First Nation (pronounced you-clue-let), Huu-ay-aht First Nations (pronounced hoo-way-ut), Toquaht Nation (pronounced toe-kwaht), Ka:’yu:’k’t’h’/Che:k’tles7et’h’ First Nations (pronounced kai-yoo-kut/chek-les-ut), and Uchucklesaht Tribe (pronounced you-chuk-les-ut), all located on the west coast of Vancouver Island. Their combined population is approximately 2,000 people, with many members living near Bamfield, Port Alberni and Ucluelet, and in Kyuquot Sound.

After the legislation for their final agreement was introduced, the five chiefs of the Maa-nulth First Nations spoke at the bar of the legislature.

“Since the time of contact, our Chiefs and leaders have continuously sought recognition of our rights and title to our homelands and the rightful place of our people therein, and have sought to reach agreement on how we could co-exist within our territories,” said Huu-ay-aht Chief Councillor Robert Dennis. “Together with British Columbians, we move one step closer to the meaning of reconciliation.”

“This treaty gives us the opportunity and tools to become self determining and independent Nations,” said Ka:’yu:’k’t’h’/Che:k’tles7et’h’ First Nations Chief Councillor Therese Smith. “It gives the responsibility of governing our nations back to our Ha’wiih and places them in government.”

“My father entrusted me to continue his quest for a treaty,” said Toquaht Hereditary Chief Bert Mack. “My people and I have succeeded beyond my expectations. I only wish he could have been here on this momentous day.”

“We have come full circle; by that I mean we are moving to a place of having self determination through having our rights to govern ourselves protected under the highest law of the land, the Canadian Constitution. As well, our people have endorsed our land package and other resources such as fish, wildlife, migratory birds, our financial package and our ability to have a much needed ‘say’ in our traditional territories outside of treaty settlement lands in the areas of governance, culture and co-management,” said Uchucklesaht Tribe Chief Councillor Charlie Cootes. “I am proud to say that our people have chosen our future and the future of our grandchildren through a vehicle called a treaty through ‘give and take,’ negotiation and agreement by all parties versus costly and lengthy litigation and confrontation. I am certain this makes not only us, but B.C. and Canada healthier, and I think this is good for everyone.”

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“We are now in a stronger position to heal the wounds of the past and weave our people back into the fabric of society,” said Ucluelet First Nation Chief Councillor Violet Mundy. “The singularity of the ratification experience has already inspired a lot of our people to re-examine their identity as Yuu-cluth-aht and look to the possibility of real change and progress for our people.”

The Maa-nulth First Nations entered the treaty process in January 1994. Ucluelet First Nation, Toquaht Nation, Ka:’yu:’k’t’h’/Che:k’tles7et’h’ First Nations, and Uchucklesaht Tribe voted to ratify the agreement in October 2007, while HUU-ay-aht First Nations ratified the Final Agreement last July.

The Maa-nulth First Nations Final Agreement will provide a capital transfer of \$73.1 million, annual resource revenue payments averaging \$1.2 million for 25 years and a land package totalling approximately 24,550 hectares to the five First Nations. It recognizes the Maa-nulth First Nations’ Aboriginal rights and title, and defines rights regarding ownership and management of lands and resources. When the treaty comes into effect, each of the five Maa-nulth First Nations will own their land in fee simple and there will be no more Indian reserves. The treaty includes self-government provisions and a phase-out of tax exemptions.

Once the Maa-nulth First Nations Treaty Settlement Legislation has been debated and is passed, the federal Cabinet must approve signing the Final Agreement. Following federal approval, a tripartite signing ceremony can be held. After the signing, settlement legislation must be approved by the Parliament of Canada and Senate. The treaty will take effect on a date agreed by the parties.

Final agreement negotiations are continuing with Sliammon Indian Band, Yale First Nation, Yekooche First Nation, and In-SHUCK-ch Nation.

For more information about treaties in British Columbia, visit www.treaties.gov.bc.ca online.

-30-

Media Contact:	Mike Morton Press Secretary Office of the Premier 250 213-8218	Maria Wilkie Communications Manager Ministry of Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation 250 387-1204 250 361-7720 (cell)
	Robert Dennis Huu-ay-aht Chief Councillor 250 735-9154	Richard Mundy Ucluelet First Nation 250 735-0704
	Carla Halvorsen Uchucklesaht Tribe 250 731-7540	Anne Morgan Toquaht Nation 250 726-5286
	Eleanor Nicolaye Ka:’yu:’k’t’h’/Che:k’tles7et’h’ First Nations 250 287-2775	

1 background(s) attached.

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