

Legislation Introduced to Ratify Historic Maa-Nulth First Nations Final Agreement

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Ottawa, Ontario (June 15, 2009) - The Honourable Chuck Strahl, Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development and Federal Interlocutor for Métis and Non-Status Indians today introduced legislation to ratify the historic Maa-nulth First Nations Final Agreement.

"The introduction of today's legislation brings the Maa-nulth First Nations one step closer to building a new future for their communities," stated Minister Strahl. "This landmark agreement brings certainty and economic benefits to all Canadians – both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal alike."

Chief Councillor Robert Dennis, Huu-ay-aht First Nations stated that he is "extremely thrilled to see the Maa-nulth First Nations Final Agreement introduced for legislation. This signals the coming into force of federal legislation making the treaty a reality and of real significance to the Huu-ay-aht people and the other Maa-nulth First Nations. We look forward to working with Canada and BC to make the treaty work."

Chief Councillor Therese Smith, Ka:'yu:k't'h'/Che'k:tlés7et'h' First Nations stated that she is "Envisioning wrapping ourselves in our dance regalia and performing for the world, and proclaiming our true identity, being truly proud of who we are as individuals and as a Nation."

"Messages we've heard from our Maa-nulth citizens echo the desires and hopes of 'owning our future', 'youth being our future leaders', 'honouring our past leaders', and 'embracing our future' with 'our choice' and 'bringing this Treaty to life'. This is our journey unfolding towards a brighter future. Our work, cooperation and common goal to succeed as a participating government to government entity, that of Canada, B.C. and each Maa-nulth Nation can now take its place. My father, Chief Bert Mack smiles, and his ancestors are smiling down on us, proud and content of this reality. We are now 'Taking Our Place'," said Hawilth Wii-tsuts-kuum, Chief Anne Mack, Toquaht Nation.

"The Uchucklesaht people view this legislation as the final confirmation that we have a treaty. A load is lifted from our shoulders. We are ready to embrace our future with open arms," said Chief Councillor Charlie Cootes, Uchucklesaht Tribe.

"I believe the greatest resource of Canada isn't its natural resources but the untapped resources in First Nations who have yet to achieve their full growth and development in terms of education," stated Chief Councillor Violet Mundy, Ucluelet First Nations.

The Maa-nulth First Nations Final Agreement is the second final agreement to be reached under the BC Treaty process and the first agreement to be reached with multiple first nations. The Final Agreement brings certainty to the ownership and use of lands and resources in the area, creates opportunities for Maa-nulth First Nations and provides predictability for continued development and growth in the province.

The Maa-nulth First Nations Final Agreement includes roughly 24,550 hectares of land, and a capital transfer of \$73.1 million for the five First Nations provided over a 10 year period. These costs will be shared by provincial and federal governments. The Final Agreement defines the Maa-nulth First Nations' rights regarding self-government and the ownership and management of lands and resources, including rights with respect to the harvest of fish and wildlife.