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## DEBATES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

(HANSARD)

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### HOUSE BLUES THURSDAY, MAY 5, 2011 Afternoon Sitting

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HSE - 20110505 PM 002/DMM/1335

#### FIRST NATIONS TREATY CELEBRATIONS IN KYUQUOT

**C. Trevena:** On a wet spring night several hundred people sat in a school gym at Kyuquot watching the clock until midnight. The day had been spent with dancing, the sharing of family songs, speeches, gift-giving and feasts.

At midnight on March 31, going into April 1, silence descended. Babies were hushed, and children and their parents, aunties and elders watched as hereditary chiefs and elected councillors of the Ka:'yu:'k't'h'-Che:k'tles7et'h' First Nation signed their first piece of legislation which took them from subjects under the Indian Act to people with the ability for self-determination.

[1350]

It was the effective date for their treaty. When asked by the elected chief councillor whether anyone wanted to speak, one councillor

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piece of legislation, which took them from subjects under the Indian Act to people with the ability for self-determination. It was the effective date for their treaty. When asked by the elected chief councillor whether anyone wanted to speak, one councillor simply said, "I'm free; I'm free." It was a refrain which echoed around the room and then, through the coming days, through the community.

The celebration moved outside, fireworks were set off, and as people left the hall, they were given a page from the Indian Act to add to the flames on the bonfire. A few hours later, the waters of Kyuquot Sound and 70-plus kilometres of the logging road to

Highway 19 were busy as the community moved almost en masse to Port Alberni, where there was a celebration for all five Maa-nulth Nations to mark their treaty's effective date.

It had been a long time coming. Years of negotiations resulting in 2007 with Bill 45 before this House, where we agreed to their treaty. Most here will remember the historic occasion when the chiefs of the Maa-nulth Nations addressed this Legislature. There were celebrations in the community too — which, as the now Minister of Health will attest to, were joyous and moving. But none of us who were at the school gym in Kyuquot will forget the power and emotion of a people who are now free.

The Ka:'yu:'k't'h'-Che:k:tles7et'h' know they still have a long way to go, but the dynamic is now different. They're working for their own future, their own way. It is a journey, they're all in the canoe, and they are paddling together.