

## **Globe and Mail article**

### **Land secured through B.C treaty process to be quickly developed**

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VICTORIA -- Within a year, concrete evidence of the first treaty benefits to the Huu-ay-aht First Nation should be visible, not just in pavement but in sewer lines and utility poles - all the infrastructure needed to launch a new housing development.

The Huu-ay-aht, a 600-member band on the west coast of Vancouver Island, voted 90 per cent in favour of a proposed treaty on the weekend, making them just the second native community to ratify a land claims settlement under British Columbia's treaty negotiation system.

On the heels of a successful ratification vote by the Tsawwassen First Nation last week, it is a sign of progress on land claims that could help improve B.C.'s investment climate. For decades, the business community has argued the uncertainty created by outstanding land claims has significantly choked investment in the province.

But Chief Robert Dennis, the lead negotiator for the Huu-ay-aht, said his interest is in providing certainty for native bands. He wants to deliver jobs for his community now - even as the proposed treaty awaits the approval of four neighbouring native communities.

"We have already been approved for a subdivision development pending ratification by our people. We will be sitting down with Canada now, saying 'Let's get this on the road and implement that,' " he said in an interview yesterday.

Mr. Dennis said bulldozers are ready to start clearing land for a 50-lot subdivision on a hillside overlooking Pachena Bay, on the band's existing reserve lands. The development would not only create jobs, but give band members who have left the community in search of work a chance to come back.

Like many native communities in B.C., the Huu-ay-aht have not waited for a land claims settlement to launch economic initiatives. Many have negotiated initiatives with private businesses or with the government to create jobs while the slow process of treaty-making grinds on.

Jerry Lampert, president of the B.C. Business Council, said the two treaty victories in the past week are encouraging. But he said the process isn't moving quickly enough, and progress is more likely to come through direct economic deals between businesses and native bands.

"You have got to be able to do business on the ground in this province and deal with first nations, and I think corporations are getting better at doing that," he said.

"We haven't waited for the treaties; we have found other ways to establish business relationships, but many tribes still have to get involved."