

**Fraser Valley Treaty Advisory Committee
First Nations Media Monitor - Excerpts
February 20, 2009**

*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.com/AboutUs/FVTAC/Pages/Reports.aspx>

AROUND THE PROVINCE

Federal Budget for Aboriginals Promising if First Step

During his recent announcement on the federal budget, Federal Minister of Finance Jim Flaherty promised an extra \$1.4-billion in investment for Aboriginal priorities across the country. Flaherty's budget figures breakdown into \$200-million to support Aboriginal skills and training, \$400-million for First Nations on reserve housing, \$515-million over the next two years for urgent, "ready-to-go" on reserve infrastructure needs – such as school construction, safe drinking water, and remediation and replacement of health and policing systems – and, \$325-million for partnership initiatives with Aboriginal organizations, provincial and regional governments for the delivery of First Nations and Inuit Health programs and Child and Family Services. However, Lax Kw'alaams Band Chief John Helin is concerned Flaherty's wide-net approach could mean that the several items that need to be addressed for his community won't get the attention they deserve. He notes that there are currently at least \$29.4-million in capital projects required, \$2.5-million needed for homes to be constructed, and another \$1.5-million for home renovations. B.C. Assembly of First Nations Chief Shawn Atleo said the budget although a "welcome and overdue measure" still falls short of the funding commitment required to ensure Canada's Aboriginal communities share fully in the economic recovery. Atleo hopes the budget is just the "first step" toward addressing what is needed and is calling on government and all parties to work with First Nations leaders to build on this first step. It is unclear how First Nations will be able to access the funding, what the decision-making criteria will be, and if the funding is "new money" or redirected former commitments, said Atleo. The new budget does not come close to the \$5-billion promised in the cancelled 2005 Kelowna accord; it is barely one third of the \$3-billion in funding and \$1-billion in loans submitted by the National Assembly of First Nations; it is \$200-million less than the \$1.6-billion minimum amount identified by the B.C. First Nations Leadership Council for the province alone; the nation-wide housing amount is two thirds of the \$600-million needed for the 8,000 homes just in B.C.; and, the First Nations school funding for the nation is \$50-million less than what is needed for B.C. alone.

*(Prince Rupert Daily News, January 29; Fort Nelson News, January 28;
Chilliwack Times, January 30)*

Ahousaht and Hesquiaht Unite to Advance Aboriginal Title

The Ahousaht First Nation and the Hesquiaht First Nation have united in their bid to advance their inherent Aboriginal title, exercise their authority, and give expression to their self-governance. The First Nations sent out joint media releases and emails to local businesses and the provincial and federal governments stating that companies wishing to conduct business in their territories must seek permission from their hereditary chiefs and pay royalties, licences or fees. Both bands claim lands and waters northwest of Tofino as part of their traditional territory and say they want to increase their presence in those lands and use traditional laws to utilize the resources. Ahousaht and Hesquiaht will present further details of their land management plans at upcoming open houses.

(Prince Rupert Daily News, February 5; Alberni Valley Times, February 6)

Aboriginal Tourism Strategy for 2010 Olympics

The Four Host First Nations (FHFN), comprised of the Lil'wat, Musqueam, Squamish and Tsleil-Waututh Nations, and the Canadian Tourism Commission have agreed on a cooperative strategy for marketing Aboriginal tourism before and during the 2010 Olympics. The strategy includes partnering on communications and media initiatives, developing and distributing marketing products, and developing Aboriginal cultural tourism programs for the 2010 Aboriginal Pavilion. FHFN chief executive officer Tewanee Joseph also noted the importance of encouraging tourists to visit areas outside of Metro Vancouver during their stay in British Columbia.

(Vancouver Sun, February 11)

First Nations Youth Arrested for Fire

A 13-year-old First Nations youth from the Chilliwack area has been arrested in connection with suspected arson after a fire gutted the family home of B.C. Lieutenant-Governor Steven Point on the Skowkale First Nation reserve February 1. Point and his family were not in the home when the fire occurred and no one was injured, however the fire caused considerable heat and smoke damage. Point said the arrest has brought his family a "measure of relief" but also sadness because of the age of the person involved. RCMP said the youth, who is known to them but does not have a criminal record, is being charged with arson, theft, and break and enter. Speculations that the fire was politically motivated are being refuted by RCMP Cpl. Peter Thiessen. "We're dealing with a 13-year-old young offender, and there's no political component to this," said Thiessen. Thiessen also noted the cooperation of the First Nations community was key to the success of the investigation.

(Vancouver Sun, February 2; Canadian Press, February 2; Chilliwack Progress Daily, February 6)

LOCAL GOVERNMENT

First Nation Seeks District Partner for Trail

The Tseshaht First Nation (TFN) is seeking a partnership with the Alberni-Clayoquot Regional District to create a recreational trail from the Orange Bridge to the Sproat River Bridge. Tseshaht CEO Cindy Stern recently presented the Bridge to Bridge Trail proposal to the regional board, noting that the project would be eligible for funding under the provincial Built Environment and Active Transportation community planning grants program. Stern said the project would cost approximately \$25,000 for planning, materials, research, and trail design. The majority of the property involved in the trail route is within the TFN reserve.

(Alberni Valley Times, January 30)

Hupacasath Project Deal Discussed

The Hupacasath First Nation (HFN), the City of Port Alberni, and the Port Alberni Port Authority (PAPA) are currently discussing a proposal to fit the Tsu-ma-as Transformation Centre into the Clutesi Haven Marina. The project has been in the works for several years and has been previously discussed in a few forums but has not yet been discussed at city council. The cultural centre will require rezoning that will entail formal public hearings to be handled by the city and HFN will host an open house with public input sessions once a deal is in place between all three parties. In 2007, the provincial and federal governments promised \$1.7-million for the construction of Tsu-ma-as to showcase Aboriginal culture, language and history, which was matched by the Island Coastal Economic Trust. The remaining funds for the \$4.4-million project will be coming from Hupacasath. Plans for the interpretive centre do not involve changes to the marina that would affect recreational boaters, said Hupacasath chief operating officer Robert Duncan. HFN and Port Alberni, which owns the marina and leases it to PAPA, also plan to purchase a nearby vacant lot for additional parking.

(Alberni Valley Times, February 6)

EDITORIAL EDITS

Campbell River Courier-Islander, February 4 – Editorial, in part:

“If you’re planning any type of resource based development in British Columbia, the first rule of thumb is to get First Nations on board.

Without them doors within the federal and provincial governments will remain hard to open. With them on your side, it is like having the magic key.

Smart companies make sure they cover the bases with First Nations. They negotiate land and resource use in exchange for jobs and other pecuniary benefits for the First Nations people. Take a look at most applications for such development and First Nations consultation is right at the top of the list.

At one time First Nations were mostly pushed to the side while the rest of society went ahead with development with token regard for First Nations interests.

But now the situation is reversed. And companies are smart enough to realize it. They make their deal with First Nations and then anyone opposed to the development is not only taking on a rich and usually foreign company, they are also taking on First Nations. It makes protest a difficult and touchy task.

For the First Nations it is an undoubtedly good thing. For others the only way to really proceed is to understand there’s a different order to things. Smart companies understand that and so do the First Nations.”

Times Colonist, February 8 – Editorial, in part:

“A spokesman for Amnesty International has some unpleasant things to say about our country. According to Alex Neve, ‘Canada has started to be a problem with regard to some human rights issues and has in fact started to get in the way of protection.’

Neve is referring to Canada’s reluctance, in 2007, to ratify the United Nations declaration on the rights of indigenous peoples.

We beg to differ. The UN declaration is a massive document. The result is a proclamation bursting at the seams with remedies for every conceivable injustice.

Of the 46 articles in the declaration, the Canadian government took issue with only three.

Article 19 give indigenous people the right to be consulted ‘through their own representative institutions’ on matters of public policy affecting them. That means virtually every decision of the Canadian Parliament might have to be cleared with tribal councils or band governments.

Article 26 and 28 deal with ownership of traditional native lands and compensation, where appropriate.

But federal and provincial governments in Canada have been negotiating land and treaty settlements for more than 20 years. Huge tracts have been turned over and hundreds of millions paid in compensation.

No one denies the history of abuse and discrimination suffered by Aboriginal peoples. There are still massive wrongs to be corrected.

But by any reasonable standard, Canada meets, and far exceeds, the requirements of the UN declaration.”

Vancouver Sun, February 11 – Art Sterritt, executive director of the Coastal First Nations, wrote, in part:

“The best building blocks for First Nations prosperity, environmental sustainability and, ultimately, treaties are local economic and environmental agreements, not the never-ending B.C. treaty process.

After two decades of treaty negotiations and a billion dollars of debt, a mere two treaties have been signed.

By contrast, coastal First Nations, through an alliance of nine First Nations on B.C.’s Central and North Coast and Haida Gwaii, has reached more than 40 agreements with the province, the federal government and the private sector. They form the building blocks that have brought us closer to becoming self-sufficient and self-governing communities while at the same time protecting our lands and waters. These agreements have generated approximately a quarter of a billion dollars for our communities, including \$80-million from outside Canada.

The \$120-million Coast Opportunity Funds will be used for economic opportunities and the management of our

lands and resources in our communities. The funds, from philanthropic foundations, British Columbia and Canada, will allow us to restore and implement responsible land, water and resource management methods in our communities, while also jump-starting a new conservation-based economy.

Forest and range agreements bring \$5-million to our communities through annual revenue-sharing.

Three million dollars have been invested to create a shellfish industry.

Alternative energy and marine-transportation resource-benefit agreements will bring \$50-million to communities.

These initiatives will see between 500 and 600 new sustainable job opportunities in our communities. Our many accomplishments to date could not have taken place within the confines of the two-decade-old treaty process. Working outside the process has allowed us to play a leadership role in bringing together a range of interests on the coast to address the unsustainable policies and practices that have damaged the environment and devastated coastal economies and communities.”