

**Fraser Valley Treaty Advisory Committee
First Nations Media Monitor - Excerpts
February 6, 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

Plaque Honours Resolved First Nations Cut-off Claims

The Ministry of Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation has presented a plaque to honour the 22 B.C. First Nations who have resolved cut-off land claims issues dating back to the First World War. Negotiations on the claims began decades ago and the province decided to honour the First Nations with the plaque once the process was completed last fall with the signing of the last four agreements with the Seton Lake Indian Band, Gitwangak Band Council, Metlakatla Band Council and Lax Kw'alaams Indian Band. However, Tseshaht First Nation Chief Les Sam, whose band settled its claim in 1985, said he is "a little insulted" by the late recognition and that the "acknowledgement should have come in the 1980s."

(Alberni Valley Times, January 23)

First Nations Gather to Explore Resources

More than 120 representatives from approximately 60 First Nations communities within the mountain pine beetle impacted area attended the recent Getting in the Game Resource Opportunities Forum in Prince George. Topics discussed during the two-day event included forestry, agro-forestry, mining, bioenergy, and sustainable land use. The forum was also an opportunity to establish meaningful dialogue between First Nations, industry and government and for First Nations to build capacity and share success stories, said First Nations Forestry Council president Leonard Thomas.

(Prince George Citizen, January 16; Prince George Free Press, January 21)

ACROSS THE NATION

First Nations Bank Beats Financial Crisis

The First Nations Bank of Canada (FNBC) announced earnings of \$1.69-million for the 2008 fiscal year. The bank contributes its strong performance, despite the current global financial crisis, to low loan losses, the control of non-interest expenses, and focusing on serving the Aboriginal economy. Total deposits for the year increased more than 33 per cent over the previous year and brought the bank's total assets to a record high of \$253.2-million. There was a 6.2 per cent return on equity for the year, which was on target with the strategic directive. In 2007, FNBC increased the Aboriginal shareholders voting control to 91 per cent through a private placement share offering. The majority of the proceeds from the private placement were used to fund the growth of the bank, which opened its sixth branch (the second in Saskatchewan) after year-end.

(CNW Group, February 2)

TREATIES

K'omoks Review Offer

The land and cash offer given to the K'omoks First Nation (KFN), which includes \$8.75-million and 1,000 hectares of Crown land, was reviewed by the band's council and negotiating team and was the subject of a private community meeting. Band officials said the proposal is a good start, but more work is needed before it will be accepted. KFN was disappointed by the exclusion of the parcel of land at the end of Goose Spit and road access to the reserve land already out there. The Department of National Defence currently occupies the access road area. "Access needs to be unconditional," said K'omoks chief negotiator Mark Stevenson.

(Courtenay Comox Valley Record, January 23)

Chief Says Specific Claims Rule Unrealistic

Chief Stewart Phillip of the Union of B.C. Indian Chiefs said a recent notice saying First Nations have a six-month deadline to resubmit their revised specific claims to the new tribunal is unrealistic. Specific claims stem from cases where the federal government failed to set aside land under treaties or where reserve land was taken illegally. There are currently a backlog of 800 specific claims, 73 per cent of those are in B.C., and in an effort to reduce this, Ottawa enacted a legislation that would bring the cases before a tribunal of judges. Specific Claims West (SCW), a branch of Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, advised First Nations of the deadline in late November. However, if they fail to meet the deadline they either lose their place in line and start the process over by submitting a new claim or keep their place in line and submit an outdated claim. The Kamloops Indian Band (KIB) recently revised and resubmitted their land claim revolving around the Douglas Reserve Initiative, but the case was rejected by SCW. Although they were unable to determine why their claim was rejected, KIB Chief Shane Gottfriedson said the band is planning to resubmit their case to the new tribunal, but had not heard about the six-month rule.

(Kamloops Daily News, January 20)

FISHERIES

First Nations Seek Federal Fisheries Funding

Along with \$8-billion in economic investments, B.C.'s First Nations are also hoping the federal budget will provide measures to protect West Coast fish stocks. The First Nations Fisheries Council wants the federal government to invest \$1.6-billion in fisheries-related initiatives such as habitat restoration as well as "an investment" in reducing commercial fishing capacity and transferring it into First Nations communities. Sto:lo Grand Chief Doug Kelly is particularly concerned by recent reports that show Chinook salmon may be tainted with toxic PCB's. "Our people consume a sizable amount of Chinook," said Kelly, who is meeting with Health Canada officials to discuss the issue and evaluate if it is safe to continue to consume them.

(Chilliwack Progress, January 20)

LOCAL GOVERNMENT

First Nation and City Receive Economic Support

The federal government is providing the St. Mary's Indian Band (SMIB) and the City of Cranbrook with funding through Western Economic Diversification Canada under the Community Economic Diversification Initiative. SMIB will receive \$335,000 to develop a conceptual engineering design for infrastructures services and complete a preliminary design and cost estimates for mixed-use land development on a parcel of reserve land. The land development will be adjacent to the airport and is expected to generate long-term economic benefits for the First

Nation community and the city. Chief Cheryl Casimer said it is an opportunity for the band to form partnerships with neighbouring communities such as Cranbrook. Mayor Scott Manjak said the city and St. Mary's would work together to develop a master plan on areas of common interest. Cranbrook is receiving \$200,000 to develop a Commercial and Light Industrial Park master plan for the airport.

(Kootenay News Advertiser, January 23)

Tla'Amin Seek Service Agreement With Powell River

The Tla'Amin First Nation (TFN) is looking at developing a building law for its lease-land holdings and is asking the City of Powell River to enter into a service agreement to provide building inspections. TFN chief administrative officer Ruth Sauder said the band needs to know if the city will agree to provide the services of its building inspector and clerical support to undertake a basic level of B.C. Building Code and Plumbing Code enforcement before they moves forward on developing a building bylaw. Tla'Amin leased land lies within the Powell River Regional District, which has not adopted a building bylaw to implement building inspection so no building permits are required. Building permits are required within the city limits, and TFN tax and lands department has been authorized by the chief and council to draft a plan that will provide their leaseholders with quality housing and safety equal to that of the city.

(Powell River Peak, January 14)