



NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release
2007OTP0161-001343
Oct. 21, 2007

Office of the Premier
Ministry of Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation

MAA-NULTH FIRST NATIONS SAY YES IN DECISIVE TREATY VOTE

VICTORIA – Community votes for all five Maa-nulth First Nations have concluded with close to eighty percent of those who voted saying yes to the treaty.

The Toquaht Nation, the Uchucklesaht Tribe, the Ucluelet First Nation, and the Ka:'yu:'k't'h'/Che:k:les7et'h' First Nations all voted in favour of the Final Agreement in a series of separate ratification votes held October 13th through 20th. The four bands join the Huu-ay-aht First Nations, who ratified the agreement in July.

"We congratulate all five Maa-nulth First Nations for moving their treaty forward. The ratification is a great achievement in the important work of treaty-making. The Maa-nulth First Nations are demonstrating strength, confidence, and self-determination," said Premier Gordon Campbell. "We are committed to working together with First Nations to continue to build meaningful agreements, to affect real change in Aboriginal communities around B.C."

The Maa-nulth First Nations are made up of approximately two thousand members. The Maa-nulth Final Agreement will provide a capital transfer of \$73.1 million, annual resource revenue payments averaging \$1.2 million for 25 years and a land transfer totalling approximately 24,551 hectares to the five First Nations.

The ratification process required a positive endorsement from 50 per cent plus one of the registered voters list for each First Nation.

The Uchucklesaht (pronounced you-chuk-les-ut) Tribe members voted in favour of the Final Agreement; of the 120 ballots cast, a resounding 97 per cent or 116 votes were in favour of the treaty. Of 137 eligible voters, 85 per cent voted in favour of the treaty.

"This multi First Nation Treaty is a first and has been a long time coming," said Uchucklesaht Tribe Chief Charlie Cootes. "Our people have now agreed that what was negotiated is something that we can live with and turn the opportunities of this treaty into reality. This is an awesome day in our history, and our forefathers would be proud; our future generations will be the beneficiaries of our hard work."

The Toquaht (pronounced toe-kwaht) Nation members voted to ratify the Maa-nulth Final Agreement; of the 73 ballots cast, 85 per cent or 62 votes were in favour of the treaty. Of 80 eligible voters, 78 per cent voted in favour of the treaty.

"My father entrusted me to continue his quest for a treaty," said Toquaht Hereditary Chief Bert Mack. "My people and I have succeeded beyond my expectations."

The Ucluelet (pronounced u-clue-let) First Nation members voted to ratify the Maa-nulth Final Agreement; of the 331 ballots cast, 70 per cent or 233 votes were in favour of the treaty. Of 376 eligible voters, 62 per cent voted in favour of the treaty.

"This is a historic day for our people. Our membership has spoken," said Ucluelet Chief Councillor Violet Mundy. "We can move on with the certainty we need to fully develop economically, socially and culturally."

The Ka:'yu:'k't'h'/Che:k:tles7et'h' (pronounced kai-yoo-kut/chek-les-ut) First Nations voted to ratify the Maa-nulth Final Agreement. Of the 272 ballots cast, 71 per cent or 192 votes were in favour of the treaty. Of 309 eligible voters, 62 per cent voted in favour of the treaty.

"Our people have spoken; we are pleased and excited to become self-governing, self-sufficient and to regain our identity," said Ka:'yu:'k't'h'/Che:k:tles7et'h' Chief Councillor Therese Smith. "Over the past few years we have negotiated a treaty on behalf of our Ha'wiih for the future of children and grandchildren to come. This is truly a historic day in our lives."

On July 28, 303 Huu-ay-aht (pronounced hoo-way-ut) First Nations members voted to ratify the Maa-nulth Final Agreement. Of the ballots cast, 90 per cent or 272 votes were in favour of the treaty. Of 378 eligible voters, 72 per cent voted in favour of the treaty.

"I want to congratulate the other four Maa-nulth tribes for the successful ratification of the Maa-nulth Final Agreement," said Huu-ay-aht First Nations Chief Robert Dennis. "Your people have sent you an incredible vote of confidence to move to the next step. I'd like to thank Canada, B.C. and other B.C. First Nations for being part of this momentous occasion."

"If the Maa-nulth treaty experience has taught us anything, it is that a historically unjust relationship can be transformed if there is a vision of a better future, the courage to pursue that vision and the confidence to do so respectfully," said Maa-nulth Lead Negotiator Gary Yabsley. "It has also taught us that the opportunity to make such a transformation is rare."

B.C. will table legislation shortly to introduce Maa-nulth settlement legislation in the Legislature to ratify the agreement on the Province's behalf.

"Strong leadership, a clear vision, persistence and discipline over many years, robust and skillful bargaining and a desire to carve out a clearly recognized and distinctive role as major players in the evolving economy of the west coast – these are the hallmarks of the Maa-nulth treaty negotiations," said A/Chief Commissioner Jack Weisgerber of the BC Treaty Commission. "It has been a privilege for us to work with the Maa-nulth table."

The Maa-nulth will be the second modern-day treaty to come before the legislature for ratification by the Province this year. On July 25, 2007, the Tsawwassen First Nation voted overwhelmingly in favour of the first urban, modern-day treaty under the B.C. treaty process. On October 15, 2007, the Tsawwassen Final Agreement was tabled in the B.C. Legislature where it is being debated. There are now seven First Nations in British Columbia who have concluded modern day final agreements.

Through treaties and other agreements with First Nations, the Province is committed to closing the socio-economic gap that separates Aboriginal people from other British Columbians and to building a New Relationship with First Nations based on respect, recognition and reconciliation.

For more information about treaties in B.C., visit www.treaties.gov.bc.ca

For more information about the Maa-nulth First Nations, www.maanulth.ca

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