



**For immediate release
April 1, 1997**

TWO VANCOUVER ISLAND FIRST NATIONS JOIN TO NEGOTIATE TREATIES

VANCOUVER -- Two Vancouver Island First Nations have agreed to work together in treaty negotiations with Canada and British Columbia, the British Columbia Treaty Commission announced today.

The Pacheedaht Nation voted March 9 to join the neighbouring Ditidaht Nation at the negotiating table. The vote paves the way for Pacheedaht to work alongside Ditidaht to negotiate a single Agreement in Principle. The two Nations will decide later on whether to seek one treaty agreement or two. By cooperating, the two Nations aim to complete their negotiations in a more efficient and effective manner.

The Pacheedaht Nation's territory is located near Port Renfrew on Vancouver Island's west coast. More than half of Pacheedaht's 147 voters cast ballots with 95 per cent in favour of joining with Ditidaht. Pacheedaht is in Stage 2 preparing for treaty negotiations. Ditidaht was first on Vancouver Island to sign a framework agreement in January, 1996 and is well advanced in Stage 4, Agreement in Principle negotiations.

"I am satisfied and pleased that Pacheedaht Nation members have given their informed consent to join with Ditidaht," said Barbara Fisher, Acting Chief Commissioner of the Treaty Commission. "Their negotiating arrangement could serve as a positive example of innovative ways for First Nations to approach treaty negotiations."

The Treaty Commission had a role to play in bringing the parties to one negotiating table, a move requiring the consent of Canada and British Columbia. With all-party consent the Treaty Commission observed the vote and, at the request of Pacheedaht, served as returning officer.

The negotiating arrangement between the two First Nations will be formalized once readiness documents for Pacheedaht, Canada and B.C. are accepted by the Treaty Commission and Ditidaht's Framework Agreement is amended to include Pacheedaht.

Pacheedaht and Ditidaht are two of 45 First Nations, representing nearly 70 per cent of First Nations people, now in the treaty process overseen by the Treaty Commission. Of those First Nations, 24 are negotiating agreements in principle.