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Says Treaty Commission in 17th Annual Report: Recognition of First Nations Reshaping Province

VICTORIA, BRITISH COLUMBIA--(Marketwire - Oct. 5, 2010) - [Recognition](#) of First Nations, which is growing and taking various forms, is reshaping British Columbia, according to the [BC Treaty Commission](#) in its 17th [annual report](#) on the status of treaty making.

The Treaty Commission says the reconciliation agreement with the Haida Nation that includes restoring the name of Haida Gwaii, the sharing of mine and other resource revenues, naming the Salish Sea and treating First Nation chiefs as heads of state during the Olympics, are indicative of the change that is occurring in this province.

While endorsing short term measures that emphasize recognition and assist First Nations, the Treaty Commission will continue to press for strong links to comprehensive treaties. A modern-day treaty is the ultimate expression of recognition.

"It is important that the BC government continue working on revenue sharing and shared decision making and developing interim solutions that provide a level of recognition, such as the incremental treaty agreements, reconciliation agreements and recognition initiatives," said [Chief Commissioner Sophie Pierre](#). "Remember though that most of these bilateral agreements are short term that, over the long haul, need to be stepping stones to treaties."

Interim measures provide immediate benefits to First Nation communities and assist in the transition from life under the *Indian Act* to self government, for example, [incremental treaty agreements](#), [reconciliation agreements](#) and [strategic engagement agreements](#).

In a move the Treaty Commission sees as promising, the federal government will recognize in treaties that a First Nation has existing aboriginal rights and will acknowledge these rights have not always been respected by the Government of Canada. The federal government will also fund First Nations, through [treaty-related measures](#), for constitution and law development, capacity development and the resolution of overlaps on shared territory. The Treaty Commission's Human Resource Capacity Development Strategy to be launched this fall will further assist First Nations to make the transition to self government.

"These are new developments that will smooth the transition to self government as we look forward to treaties being implemented," said Pierre. "Recent progress on treaties has given rise to this shift in our focus at the Treaty Commission, which will include helping First Nations to resolve territorial issues."

The First Nations Summit continues to be a strong voice in public discussion of issues involving other governments and industry, for example, on fisheries, mining, forestry, technology, child and family welfare, health care and education. Progress is being made in many of these areas with First Nations having a greater say in public policy and more responsibility for governance in these areas.

The current [status report](#) shows there are two ratified final agreements, three completed final agreements yet to be ratified and two final agreements close to completion for a total of seven. There are seven First Nations close to concluding agreements in principle and another 27 First Nations that remain active in treaty negotiations, a total of 41 of the 60 First Nations in the treaty process. The 60 First Nations represent 110 Indian Act bands and 67% of the registered Indian population in the province.

Progress has been made on each of the six recommendations in the Treaty Commission's [2009 annual report](#); on completing final agreements; on concluding agreements in principle; on resolving overlaps; on incremental treaty agreements; on revitalizing the treaty process; and on making implementation easier.

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