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**TREATIES ARE WITHIN REACH BUT CHALLENGES REMAIN
SAYS TREATY COMMISSION IN TENTH ANNUAL REPORT**

VANCOUVER—The Treaty Commission is praising important breakthroughs and agreements in treaty negotiations, but emphasizes the parties face significant challenges as many of the most difficult issues remain to be negotiated.

"Treaties are within reach," said Chief Commissioner Miles Richardson in releasing the Treaty Commission's 10th annual report. "After 10 years of effort we are beginning to make real progress. Success, however, depends on our next steps."

Last year the Treaty Commission reported that negotiations, after much disruption and delay, had resumed. This year, five treaty tables have achieved significant progress and several more have set out aggressive work plans to achieve agreements in principle in 2004.

The Lheidli T'enneh First Nation has an agreement in principle and Maa-nulth First Nations will have an agreement in principle this week. Sliammon, Snuneymuxw and Tsawwassen must still decide whether the agreements in principle recommended by their negotiators will form the basis for treaties.

The Treaty Commission notes in its report that while these agreements in principle are an important milestone, the details for governance, certainty, compensation, cooperative management and revenue sharing remain to be negotiated.

In 2001 the Treaty Commission undertook a review of the treaty process and made recommendations for change. In 2002, those recommendations were the subject of high level talks among the parties in negotiations.

"We are encouraged by the results that have been achieved this year and remain positive about the opportunities for continued progress in negotiations. There are now a series of options that negotiators can consider to conclude treaties," said Richardson.

In its report, the Treaty Commission says that success depends on the parties' willingness to address outstanding issues and, in addressing them, respect and adhere to their fundamental commitments as set out in the BC Claims Task Force Report.

This report also includes an article outlining the business case for treaties, which includes numerous examples of evolving joint ventures among First Nations and BC businesses. The article is part of the Treaty Commission's work over the next several

months to identify and quantify the compelling economic benefits of treaties to British Columbia.

The Annual Report 2003 is available at www.bctreaty.net or by calling 604 482 9200 or 1 800 665 8330 to request a hard copy.

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