

# FIRST NATIONS

## Edition

March 6, 2015

Twice monthly summary of news reports from throughout British Columbia on First Nations, rights & title issues, and Aboriginal communities.

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Management of Parks  
Campgrounds  
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Haynes Point Park



Okanagan Falls Park



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**Osoyoos Band Takes Over Management of Campgrounds**

B.C. Parks has announced an open-ended deal for the Osoyoos Indian Band (OIB) to manage campgrounds in the Haynes Point and Okanagan Falls parks. Haynes Point was closed to the public last fall following the discovery of 1,200-year-old ancestral remains and evidence that the site has been used by First Nations for 4,000 years. Rather than forcing the permanent closure of the park, Chief Clarence Louie said OIB agreed to manage it instead. Okanagan Falls was added to the agreement because the site was expropriated from the band's reserve land in 1915 and given to settlers. Louie said that both parks will be renamed with traditional nsyilxcen (Okanagan language) place names, but their use won't change. Both seasonal campgrounds will operate as before and visitors and locals will continue to be able to walk the nature trails at Haynes Point, said Louie.



On February 19, OIB members re-elected Louie as chief. His only challenger was Ernest Baptiste. Elected council members (in order of number of votes) were Sammy Louie, Ronny McGinnis, Theresa Gabriel, Yvonne Weinert, and Leona Baptiste.

*(Osoyoos Times, February 18; Penticton Herald, February 20; Penticton Western News, February 27)*



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## First Nation and Province Make Land Transfer Deal

The Westbank First Nation (WFN) and provincial government have reached a tentative agreement for replacement land, as part of a 2009 agreement with the Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure in exchange for 3.2 hectares of land the band gave. An earlier land trade package that involved WFN receiving 283 hectares of Crown land plus \$8-million fell through in 2012 following opposition from West Kelowna and the public. The new deal includes \$1.5-million in cash, to be used for a mutually agreed-upon future land purchase, and four parcels of land: two private agricultural properties within the City of Kelowna; one private property on the east side of Lower Arrow Lake; and one Crown land parcel east of Kelowna.

*(Westside Weekly, February 24)*

\*See related editorial on Page 7

## Seabird Island Gets Approval for Gravel Project

On February 6, Seabird Island First Nation received federal Land Act tenure and Water Act approval by the provincial Ministry of Forests, Lands and Natural Resource Operations to remove 105,000 cubic metres of gravel from the Fraser River, with a cutoff date of March 15. Approval is subject to the following conditions: Establishment of an on-site monitoring program; Impacts to salmon habitat to be monitored and compensated for; and Revised design of excavation area and establishment of mitigation measures for impacts to sturgeon. The project has also received Fisheries Act authorization from the Department of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO) that include specific conditions to protect fish and fish habitat. Work will avoid sensitive sturgeon and salmon spawning habitats and will include mitigations, monitoring, and off-setting measures, noted DFO's media representative. Regarding critics concerns that the approval sets a "terrible precedent" and opens up the river for commercial gravel mining not based on flood control reasons, ministry representative Greig Bethel noted that decisions are made on a case-by-case basis.



*(Chilliwack Progress, February 18)*

## Simpew Says Park Bill Infringes Aboriginal Rights

Chief Rita Matthew of the Simpew First Nation says B.C.'s draft Policy for Issuing Park Use Permits for Research Purposes (Bill 4), which would authorize corporations to obtain research permits in parks and allow boundary adjustments for development, contravenes the band's "constitutionally protected Aboriginal rights." Matthew said her efforts to meet with Minister of Environment Mary Polak to discuss the policy "have been ignored for the last nine months." The band has issued a statement demanding meetings and stating that the province must obtain Simpew consent to implement Bill 4. However, ministry officials said they offered to have Polak's staff meet with the Simpew. There are eight provincial parks within the territory that the Simpew assert exclusive Aboriginal title to, and which they claim are inherently tied to their identity, culture and traditional practices.

*(North Thompson Star, February 19; Kamloops This Week, February 20)*

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## Northern Chiefs Say Oil by Rail is too Risky

Some First Nations leaders in northern B.C. are calling for a halt on the province's plans to transport oil via rail through their traditional territories and are threatening to block any attempts. Burns Lake First Nation Chief Dan George said oil by rail is a serious threat to their communities and the environment and therefore they feel obliged to explore safer alternatives. The chiefs are also opposed to the proposed Northern Gateway pipeline, but have agreed to consider the proposal for the Eagle Spirit Energy pipeline project. The chiefs plan to meet in the next 30 to 45 days to discuss their next steps.

*(Vancouver Sun, February 19)*

## Court Denies BC Hydro Spring Hearing

BC Hydro motion to have a federal court hear its case to build the Site C dam this spring has been denied. The Peace Valley Landowners Association (PVLA) and affected First Nations were looking to appear in court this summer, and the court has asked both sides to submit their July and August availability dates. PVLA, which represents homeowners whose lands would be flooded by the dam's reservoir, and several First Nations are asking the court to intervene and prevent construction of the dam.

*(Northerner, February 13)*

## Squamish Evaluate Projects in their Territory

As part of an ongoing independent assessment by Squamish Nation experts, the band recently held an internal meeting on the proposed Woodfibre LNG plant and FortisBC natural gas pipeline expansion projects, which is within the nation's traditional territory. Chief Ian Campbell noted that a referendum of members is not anticipated. A report on the environmental, technical, cultural and spiritual analysis of the projects will be produced and provided to Squamish chiefs and council who will then vote on them, said Campbell.

*(Coast Reporter, February 20)*

## Lake Cowichan Band Presents Tourism Plan

Lake Cowichan First Nation Chief Cyril Livingstone recently announced a new project set to begin this summer – the Lake Cowichan Experience. The band has completed the business plans and is currently in the process of obtaining funding from Aboriginal Affairs. The project will proceed in three phases. Phase one will include the launch of a guided canoe tour around the lake that will showcase First Nations history and culture, which could be in operation as early as 2020. The second and third phases will consist of building a facility on the lake to house non-motorized watercraft, a gift shop, and a café.

*(Lake Cowichan Gazette, February 26)*

## Huu-ay-aht Move into Stage Two of LNG Project

Members of the Huu-ay-aht First Nation (HFN) have voted in favour of the band's proposed \$30-billion liquefied natural gas (LNG) facility in Sarita Bay (in partnership with Steelhead LNG), which means the project has moved into the second stage. James Edward, HFN executive director, said that all baseline environmental studies are either being contemplated or are underway, and the environmental assessment certificate will probably be filed within the next 12 months. Huu-ay-aht are also in the process of developing a memorandum of understanding with North Island College to help local people prepare to fill the employment opportunities that will become available through the project.

*(Alberni Valley News, February 12)*

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## FORESTRY

**First Nations Sign Deal for Forestry Partnership**

The K'omoks First Nation and the Qualicum First Nations have signed a Letter of Intent to develop a forestry partnership that would allow them to properly take advantage of the timber resources within their traditional territories. The First Nations plan to form a logging company on Central Vancouver Island to manage the forest cover and maximize economic benefits.

*(Comox Valley Echo, February 13)*

**B.C. Doesn't Have to Pay Logging Company after First Nation Blockade**

The B.C. Court of Appeal has overturned an earlier decision ordering the provincial government to pay Moulton Contracting Ltd. \$175-million for failing to notify the company that the Fort Nelson First Nation (FNFN) was dissatisfied and threatened to stop the logging operation. In 2006, FNFN set up a blockade and Moulton was never able to complete the logging under the timber sale licences, and within weeks of the blockade they released all workers and their harvesting equipment was repossessed. The company argued that the province had promised that "all necessary consultation" with First Nations was complete and they weren't made aware of FNFN's threats. However, the appeals panel determined that "there is no persuasive legal authority" that required the province to let Moulton know of any First Nations dissatisfaction.

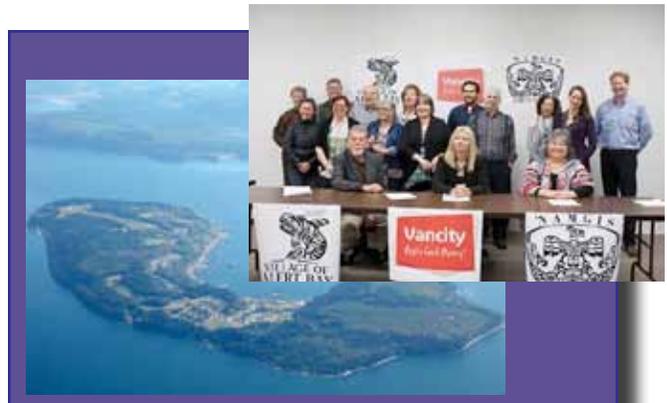
*(Vancouver 24, February 27)*

## LOCAL GOVERNMENT

**'Namgis and Alert Bay Partner with Vancity for Remote Community Banking**

On February 25, the 'Namgis First Nation, the Village of Alert Bay, and Vancity Credit Union signed a Memorandum of Understanding that involves bringing full-service banking to Cormorant Island residents. Currently, residents of the remote community have to travel by ferry to access face-to-face banking services. Services to remote areas are a challenge to financial institutions due to low populations and high overhead costs. The MOU overcomes these challenges through an innovative model, the first in Canada, which allows the local community to play a working role in providing an array of services such as in-person banking, cash handling for business operations, and onsite support for investments, loans and account signatories.

*(Nation Talk, February 26)*



## HEALTH &amp; COMMUNITY

**Ceremony to Help Heal Residential School Survivors**

Hundreds of St. Michael's Indian Residential School survivors and relatives, and members and elders from the 'Namgis First Nation gathered for a healing ceremony and blessing to mark the demolition of the school building. The school was built by the federal government in 1929, administered by the Anglican Church, and was in operation for more than four decades. It was part of a system that has since been discredited for abuses and attempting to strip Aboriginal children of their culture and language. The building was transferred to the 'Namgis in 1975 and served as a band office for many years but has been largely abandoned for the past decade.

*(Campbell River Mirror, February 20)*

**Moose Hide Men Stand Together Against Violence**

The Fourth Annual Moose Hide Campaign took place on February 12, where Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal men gathered outside the legislature to stand against violence and abuse towards Aboriginal women. Moose Hide Campaign attendees wear a patch of moose hide to signify their commitment to honour, respect and protect the women and children in their lives, and to work together to end violence against all women. Canim Lake Band Chief Mike Archie said men have their own issues and problems, but they need to acknowledge them and seek help, and they need to see that violence does not belong in the family, or in any setting.

*(Free Press, February 26)*

**On Reserve Health Centre will Strengthen Community**

Penticton Indian Band Chief Jonathan Kruger said the new on reserve health and social services centre should help with some band members who shy away from seeing professionals in the city. The Snxastwilxtn Centre (A Place to Heal) has two medical examinations rooms, two dental chairs, office and meeting space, and a fitness centre, and incorporates traditional First Nations medicine. The band contributed \$1.7-million for the construction of the building and Health Canada provided an additional \$2.1-million.

*(Penticton Western News, February 25)*

## EDUCATION

**Ministry Hosts Dialogues on Aboriginal Education**

The B.C. Ministry of Education, in partnership with the First Nations Education Council and various school districts, played host to five regional gatherings with the goal of further defining "Aboriginal perspectives and worldviews in the classroom." Participants included ministry facilitators, local educators, parents, and students, as well as representatives of district First Nations programs. The ministry will use the ideas generated during the sessions to create a comprehensive guidebook for teachers. Kindergarten to Grade 12 teachers will also gather for five half-day sessions with their district's Aboriginal education resource team, district literacy consultant, and a district elder.

*(North Island Gazette, February 12; Burnaby Now, February 18)*

## EDITORIAL

### Fourth Aboriginal Education Agreement Close to being Finalized

The Campbell River School Board was presented with the final draft of the district's fourth Aboriginal Education Enhancement Agreement between School District 72 and the Aboriginal Education Advisory Council (AEAC). The draft has already been approved by AEAC, local Chiefs and Councils, and the Aboriginal Education Branch of the Ministry of Education. The Board of Education has also voted to accept it, subject to approval by the Laichwiltach Board of Directors. The goals of the new agreement include: increasing all Aboriginal students' sense of pride; improving participation of parents, families, caregivers, educators and community; improving literacy and numeracy; improving transition readiness; and increasing the number of Aboriginal graduates.

*(Campbell River Mirror, February 18)*

### Daily Courier, February 25 – Ron Seymour wrote, in part:

“The hullabaloo that erupted after the government’s last attempt to buy off, er, compensate the Westbank First Nation doesn’t seem set to happen this time around.

A sweet and unprecedented deal that will give the band a sizable physical, economic and environmental presence in Kelowna – on 60 acres of land over which the City of Kelowna now won’t have any effective jurisdiction – won’t be objected to by municipal officials.

Perhaps not for the Macdonnells, a long-time Kelowna farming family which is at the centre of the latest episode in this land swap saga.

And definitely not for the taxpayers of the province, who again face the prospect of seeing millions of their dollars directed toward a band that has already profited handsomely from road improvements on reserve land.

But if it simply puts a merciful end to this long-running affair, I guess that’s a victory of sorts.

Hotel, student housing, high-density housing, industrial complex, strip mall, strip mine – presumably the band has some money-making intentions for the land.

Basically, two ne Indian reserves are being created within the City of Kelowna for road improvements on the Westside.”



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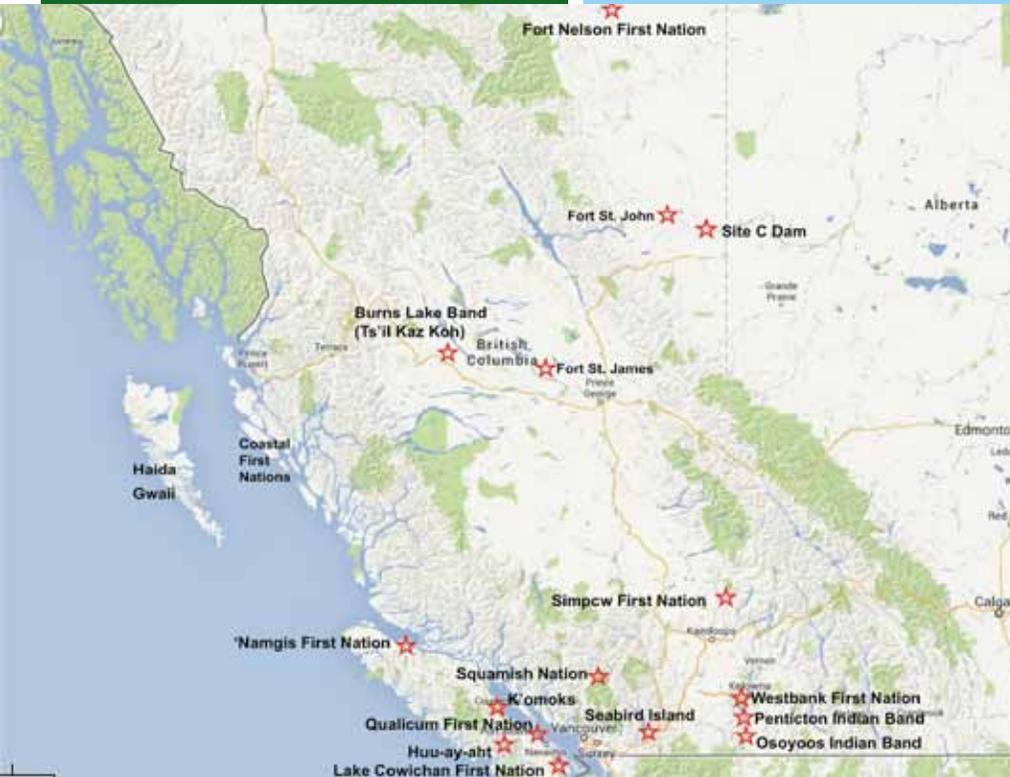
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Highlighting locations related to stories in this edition.



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