

## First treaty with Island First Nation goes to legislature

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Legislation to create Vancouver Island's first modern-day treaty was introduced today in the legislature.

Chiefs from five participating First Nations appeared before MLAs to speak at the bar of the chamber as the Maa-nulth treaty was brought before the house.

"Do you feel like making some history today?" said enthusiastic B.C. Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation Minister Mike de Jong as the chiefs and close to 200 members of the Maa-nulth contingent gathered in the rotunda prior to entering the house.

De Jong's remarks were greeted with loud cheers by members of the Maa-nulth First Nations, which include about 2,000 people on the west coast of the Island. Those nations are the Ucluelet, Toquaht, Huu-ay-aht, Ka: 'yu: 'k't'h'/Che: k'tles7et'h' and Uchucklesaht.

The treaty, which is expected to be passed quickly by the legislature, includes \$73.1 million in cash, annual resource revenue payments averaging \$1.2 million for 25 years and a land package including nearly 25,000 hectares. The total agreement, which includes hunting and fishing allotments, could be worth as much as \$500 million.

In exchange, the Maa-nulth people will surrender their non-taxable status after 12 years. Their land will fall under provincial, rather than federal, jurisdictions and members will be able to own their homes.

The Maa-nulth treaty is the second to reach the legislature. The Tsawwassen treaty was passed earlier this month by MLAs and is just awaiting royal ascent.

"This is a triumph for generations of Maa-nulth leaders and people," Premier Gordon Campbell said before entering the house. "It's a triumph for their ancestors and for those who came before. We all wish they were here today but I think we should know that their eyes are now on the legislature of British Columbia.

"This is about self-determination, to set out the future you want and then working together to build it. And I want to say congratulations to all of you for the strength of your vision when you voted to ratify this treaty."

Campbell presented the five Maa-nulth chiefs with the gift of a canoe, with each chief receiving a paddle. The chiefs then presented a paddle to Premier Gordon Campbell and federal representative, Senator Gerry St. Germain.

"You are now the captain of our canoe," Toquat hereditary chief Bert Mack told the premier.

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