

Maa-nulth Leaders Speak At Legislature

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(Editor's note: The following is the text of speeches made in the B.C. legislature Wednesday after the Maa-nulth Treaty, known as bill 45, was introduced. Source: [link](#))

Hon. Mike de Jong: What an honour, on behalf of the government, to be able to introduce bill 45, Maa-nulth First Nations Final Agreement Act.

This is the legislation that will enable the Maa-nulth First Nations final agreement, the first such agreement with multiple first nations under the British Columbia Treaty Commission process. This legislation will give that agreement effect.

The five first nations that comprise the Maa-nulth First Nations are all members of the Nuuchah-nulth Tribal Council. They are the Huu-ay-aht First Nation, the Ka:'yu:'k't'h'-Che:k:tles7et'h' First Nation, the Toquaht Nation, the Uchucklesaht Tribe and the Ucluelet First Nation. These, comprising the Maa-nulth First Nations, represent in excess of 2,000 people living on Vancouver Island near Bamfield, Port Alberni, Ucluelet and Kyuquot Sound.

I know that there are many individuals — many of them are here in this chamber — who have toiled for years with passion, with dedication to work to the day when this final agreement could be presented to the House. It's because the Maa-nulth — their leaders, who we are going to hear from in a moment — have confidence in what this agreement can do for their communities, for their people that this negotiation has ended with a successful treaty.

The Maa-nulth First Nations agreement-in-principle was signed in October 2003, and the final agreement was initialled last December. We're able to celebrate the introduction of this legislation because all five communities have overwhelmingly endorsed the agreement in a series of community ratification votes, culminating in a nearly 80 per cent ratification mandate for the visionary leaders who negotiated this agreement.

The final agreement presents the Maa-nulth people with an unprecedented opportunity to begin building a better future — self-governing, self-reliant communities enjoying the same opportunities as other British Columbians to translate their energy, their culture, their passion into economic and social stability. The Maa-nulth First Nations final agreement will provide land, cash and resources to these five first nations and their communities so that they can build stronger and more prosperous futures for them, for their families and for all of their communities.

Treaties help bridge that socioeconomic gap that has separated us for so long. The Maa-nulth First Nations final agreement will create certainty for the Maa-nulth people and their communities but also for their neighbours in nearby communities.

It's an honour to bring this settlement legislation to the chamber and to pay tribute to Chief

Charlie Cootes, Chief Robert Dennis, Chief Bert Mack, Chief Vi Mundy and Chief Tess Smith for their visionary and courageous leadership in helping to make this a reality. It's a historic day again for British Columbia, for the Maa-nulth First Nations and for members on both sides of this chamber.

I move that this historic bill be placed on the orders of the day for second reading at the next sitting of the House after today.

Bill 45, Maa-nulth First Nations Final Agreement Act, introduced, read a first time and ordered to be placed on orders of the day for second reading at the next sitting of the House after today.

Hon. M. de Jong: I seek leave to table the following documents, the Maa-nulth First Nations tax treatment agreement and the Maa-nulth First Nations harvest agreement, which are both referred to in Bill 45, and the real property tax coordination agreements for each of the five First Nations.

Leave granted.

Motions without Notice

Permission For Maa-nulth First Nations Leaders to Address the House

Hon. M. de Jong: Mr. Speaker, by leave, I move the following:

[That Chief Councillor Charlie Cootes of the Uchucklesaht First Nations, Chief Councillor Violet Mundy of the Ucluelet First Nation, Chief Councillor Tess Smith of the Ka:'yu:'k't'h'-Che:k:tles7et'h' First Nation, Chief Councillor Robert Dennis Sr. of the Huu-ay-aht First Nation and Hereditary Chief Bert Mack of the Toquaht First Nation be permitted to address this assembly from the Bar of the House.]

Leave granted.

Motion approved.

Mr. Speaker: I welcome Chief Charlie Cootes to the Bar of the house.

Address from the Bar of the House

Charlie Cootes: Good afternoon. This is a great day. I would like to start off my presentation by thanking the Esquimalt and the Songhees people for allowing us to carry out this historic event in their traditional territory.

It is an honour to be standing here in the B.C. legislature addressing our Maa-nulth people, who have made this long journey to come to be with us here today. It is an honour for me to be here addressing Premier Campbell and his government and, as well, the opposition party and other guests that have been invited.

The Maa-nulth treaty is an expression of our vision of the future. It is a vision that permits us to see a future filled with opportunities. It is a vision that removes the crippling institutions of our colonial era, and it is a vision that confidently embraces a new relationship with Canada and British Columbia. It is a vision that permits us to move forward and leave the pain of the past behind.

It is a vision that we share with B.C. and Canada that we have reached through respectful

negotiations. It is a vision that has as its foundation a mutual respect and coexistence, and it is a vision that we believe will improve the lives of not only Uchucklesaht citizens but also fellow British Columbians and our country as a whole.

Our communities have spoken confidently and overwhelmingly in support of this treaty. This treaty is an acknowledgment of the unique legal status of the Uchucklesaht Tribe within Canadian Confederation. The treaty is an acknowledgment of the distinctiveness of the Uchucklesaht society.

The treaty will provide us with constitutional assurance of our right to remain distinct. At the same time, it permits us to participate in any meaningful and positive way with the rest of society. We are neither trapped in the past nor afraid of the future.

Our lands are protected to the greatest possible extent of the law. Our rights to access resources, fish, timber, water and so forth are assured at law and extend off of our treaty settlement lands.

As you know, there is a significant gap between aboriginal people in Canada and the rest of society in areas such as health, education and other social issues. Now we have a significant opportunity to construct viable, modern economies — economies that allow us to address and to remedy many of the social issues that we face.

We will free ourselves of the historic burden of a bureaucracy and reclaim our historic right to govern ourselves and determine what is in our own best interests. We will have the opportunity to revive, protect and express our language and our culture.

We have negotiated a social contract — a contract that is alive, like the parties to it protect and express our language and our culture.

We have negotiated a social contract — a contract that is alive, like the parties to it; a contract that will be reviewed periodically to ensure that our mutual objectives are being met. As such, this is an agreement in which all British Columbians and Canadians should take pride. Our membership has given us direction and has endorsed what we have negotiated through their ratification of this final agreement.

Now that the final agreement has reached the B.C. legislative chambers, I hope that the governments of B.C. and Canada will respect what their governments have negotiated and also ratify this agreement in short order to create the first multi-first nation treaty under the BCTC process in British Columbia.

Mr. Speaker: Welcome, Chief Councillor Violet Mundy to the Bar of the house. Ucluelet member Richard Mundy will speak on her behalf.

Richard Mundy: Mr. Speaker, honoured members, ladies and gentlemen, on behalf of the Ucluelet First Nation Chief Councillor, I am honoured and humbled to stand here, where so many of Canada's leaders have come before me, and so many will follow.

The peaceful transfer of authority is rare in history. With the final agreement, we affirm old traditions and make new beginnings. In conjunction with other pioneering treaty nations, we are rewriting the history of treaty negotiations in British Columbia and in Canada.

Ratification of our treaty has inspired membership to re-examine their identity as Ucluelet. There is renewed hope for the future as we embrace the principles that unite and lead us onward.

As we continue planning and preparing for our future in a post-treaty environment, innovation and inclusion will be paramount themes within the structure of our implementation strategy. This emphasis on community involvement speaks directly to the spirit of our new government, ones whose aspirations could never come to life under the

dark shadow of an archaic Indian Act.

Implementation looms on our horizon. This will be the serious work of leaders and citizens in every generation. However, I think it is the goal of everyone in this room to better understand how we as first nations can move forward and make the best of a system that has never before worked in our favour. Collectively, we are regaining our strength as First Nations leaders and will be in a better position to heal the wounds of the past and begin to weave our people back into the fabric of society.

Our youth are getting smarter. Everywhere I go within the first nations communities, I encounter an increasing number of healthy and vibrant young people getting involved with important things — things that will have a positive impact on our people and the people of Canada for generations to come. Today's children and youth will have the privilege of contending with the groundbreaking opportunities of tomorrow because trade and industry potentials have been redefined under our treaty. We have negotiated a landmark in the history of our people. We are part of a revolution spurring controversy at the highest levels of local, national and international governments.

Even after all these years of aspiring to improve conditions for our people, we have a long way yet to travel. We have a place, all of us, in this long story — a story we must continue but whose end we will not see. With passion and purpose, today we affirm a new commitment to live out our nation's promise of a better future.

Mr. Speaker: Welcome Therese Smith to the Bar of the house.

Therese Smith: Good afternoon. [Nuu-chah-nulth was spoken.] My name is Therese Smith, and I represent the Ka:'yu:'k't'h'-Che:k:tlés7et'h' of Ahousaht, where hereditary chiefs' traditional territories amount to 6,551 hectares of sea and land.

Your honour Mr. Lieutenant-Governor Steven Point, Premier Campbell, Mr. Speaker, members of the legislative assembly and all citizens of Canada and British Columbia, it is an honour to address you.

I must begin by saying we Ka:'yu:'k't'h'-Che:k:tlés7et'h' are not without feelings. We are sensitive people. We love the sea and the land that has always supported us and provided us with a rich lifestyle. The generosity shown us in our [Nuu-chah-nulth was spoken] has led us to a lifestyle rich in deep spirituality. We are known around the world for our feasting and potlatching system based on generosity and sharing of resources. We have always known how to share with our neighbours.

Since before this province was founded in 1858, our people have been uncomfortable about the invasion of our private properties, the unauthorized extraction of our resources and the way in which our people have been treated.

Today, with the ratification of this agreement, we have the opportunity to address these ills. We can now begin to accept each other in a manner unprecedented in our history. We can begin to share in a realistic way the resources in the [Nuu-chah-nulth was spoken.] The profits of all resource extraction in our traditional territories must benefit our communities. As of this point in time we also have an opportunity to readjust and reshape our social relations. Until now, racism has played a very damaging role in the way our people have experienced education, labour and indeed citizenship in this province. After today we must build together as sisters and brothers. Coming to this podium presents me with the opportunity to address our new coming together.

The almost 800 pages of political and legal chapters, clauses and subclauses in the final agreement cannot and will not guarantee our people a better life, a fair share of our resources

nor a place in the hearts of all British Columbians. We cannot legislate love. It is through the intent and the spirit of these very long, tiring and costly negotiations that we shall get to a better place — all of us — as British Columbians.

I also would like to take this moment to remember George Watts and all the things he made possible for us to be here today. His strong leadership and negotiation skills have accomplished much. These will certainly be appreciated for a long time. George always said: "We need to move forward. We will make mistakes, but we will learn from them." I know he'd be happy for our people. So it is with hope that I come to this podium, and it is with hope for our shared future that I leave this podium.

[Nuu-chah-nulth was spoken.] My prayers are that we can all look to the future with a new and greater respect and care for each other. Thank you, ladies and gentlemen of the Legislature.

Mr. Speaker: I welcome Chief Councillor Robert Dennis Sr. and Hereditary Chief Spencer Peters to the Bar of the house.

Robert Dennis Sr.: [Nuu-chah-nulth was spoken.] ...for allowing us on your traditional territory to be here today. Thank you, Mr. Speaker, hon. premier, hon. leader of the opposition, hon. members of the house, ladies and gentlemen. It is indeed an honour to be in your House today to share a few words from a Huu-ay-aht perspective before you begin your discussions on the Maa-nulth treaty.

It is also my honour to stand here with our head chief Beside ... stands his son ... and also his other chiefs If you were in our house, those chiefs would be standing here today beside him.

Since the time of contact we have had an opportunity to see many things happening in our territory — many things that were beneficial to our well-being but, unfortunately, many things that were not good to our well-being. We suffered diseases, we suffered intrusion, and we suffered situations where we saw our children placed in residential schools. And then we saw our people removed from our lands.

Today we begin a road of reconciling that. Today, working with this house, this government and the opposition members, we can reconcile the mistakes of the past.

We entered this modern-day treaty with a goal in mind. The goal in mind was that we wanted to make lives better for our people. We wanted to see more of our children educated. We want to see more of our people earning a meaningful income within their homeland.

Today we hope those things can become a reality. Working with you, we are positive that those changes will occur.

Since the time of contact we have seen resources removed from our territory, sometimes of little or no benefit to the Huu-ay-aht people. Our chiefs and his chiefs had to watch this happen, even though they did not want that to happen.

Unfortunately, there was this legislation called the Indian Act that regulated how Indian people were going to live from the day they were born until they died. That legislation is not a proud history of our people and our chiefs. Today we hope to change that.

In the late 19th century there were records — they called them census records — that showed how many people lived in these different villages. In Kiix'in village it showed that there were 207 people left after the diseases wiped our people out. Of those 207 people, ladies and gentlemen, 67 of them were fishermen and sealers.

Kiix'in's people were people of the sea. They were fishermen. They made a living on what

they took from the sea. Through time that has changed by legislation from the federal government that effectively removed our people from the fishing industry. Today we hope the treaty will rectify that terrible injustice that was done to our people.

We spent a lot of years educating the negotiators from Canada and B.C. about Kiix'in's culture and his people. It was a hard task, and I tell you that even today I think some of those negotiators still don't know what it's all about. So we will begin a new road. Maybe one day they'll wake up and realize that there is something to change — something must change; something needs to change.

[Nuu-chah-nulth was spoken] envisions one day that he will be working side by side with the new, elected government of Huu-ay-aht. Once again, his nation will stand proud to be Huu-ay-aht. Once again, his nation will gain the benefits of the resources of his [Nuu-chah-nulth was spoken] — or, as you call it, his territory. We hope that this treaty will begin to bring that vision to reality and true meaning of reconciliation.

Positive change can take place. Positive change will take place with us working together. We all represent different people, different communities, but at the end of the day, we need to work together so that our elders are looked after, our children are looked after and the people of each of our communities are looked after.

The treaty offers opportunities for all of us. The treaty is not just a treaty for Huu-ay-aht. It is not just a treaty for Uchucklesaht or Toquaht or Ka:'yu:'k't'h'/Che:k:tes7et'h' or Ucluelet.

This treaty, in my view, is for all of us because today British Columbia can stand proud and say: "I was part of that change. I was willing to stand up and say things must change. Things cannot stay the same. Things cannot remain status quo."

In closing, Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank you for allowing us to be in your House, allowing us to say a few words to the members here. Thank you. [Nu-chah-nulth was spoken.] [Applause.]

Mr. Speaker: I welcome Hereditary Chief Bert Mack to the Bar of the House.

Bert Mack: To the hon. [Nuu-chah-nulth was spoken], otherwise known as chiefs; to the hon. premier; to the honourable ladies in this legislature; and the honourable men, the gentlemen. I am very happy to stand here before you.

We have been through so much, and we have accomplished a few things at a time, mind you. But today I heard Premier Campbell make a speech in Alberni. It was about hope. Hope is what we're looking for — our people. Hope is so important. Hope you can work with and accomplish — once you get the meaning of hope.

There are so many tracks. We have people out there who think that we're on the wrong path. I don't believe that we're on the wrong path.

What happened to my territory? There is not enough timber there to sustain my people, and the fish are disappearing in the bays in the ocean in front of my territory. I had to think of another trail where I could tell my people after I heard Premier Campbell say "hope," and that's what I came back and told my people: we have hope.

There are so many ways to look at where we're at now, and I know that we are on the right track. I appreciate the people who say that we're on the wrong track. To me, this proves that we have a good, democratic system — when you can listen to the people, the opposition. I hope that these people will also listen to us.

The way of the opposition is not very clear to me, because I know where I stand. I just mentioned that all the resources are gone in my territory. I had to find a new way and a new path, and I believe I'm right.

To those people, as I said, I appreciate their opposition, because it has given me more strength to prove that I'm on the right track. I hope that they, too, will someday say the same thing I'm saying now. I have no animosity against these people.

That's why I say I appreciate them; it gives me strength. My father was a leader that was on the trail of the treaty in the 1930s. I was seven years old when I first sat in a meeting with my father and his peers.

When I was 18, he turned over his chief's chair to me. I was 18 years old. But he never left my side. He was beside me until he was 84 and passed on.

I will never forget what my father taught me, and that was the trail to the treaty. That was his aim along with the people from all over B.C. I cannot mention every one of them that were the leaders on the trail of the treaty in 1930.

It has not been easy, but I never dwell on.... If anything does happen to me, I don't dwell on that. I dwell on the good things that I've learned, the good things I want to show people: that we are British Columbians, Canadians and our own tribes. I am proud to be in that position. There are so many ways I've been through, as I said, since I was 18, and I have met a lot of you gentlemen that are sitting here before you and the ladies.

And I've got to mention to the ladies that you're an inspiration to our young ladies. As of today they are trying to do the same thing you're doing right now, and I know some of them are going to make it. They admire you young ladies in this chamber. I should say something about the handsome gentlemen. I have known many, many politicians, Ministers, and it's been a great adventure to me.

I must say too: I have never in my life run into segregation. I have never run into people that are against my people.

My father and my grandmother taught me how to be a gentleman. I hope I'm making it.

In this room there are so many people that I know, and some of the gentlemen and ladies in the legislature — I know some, and I admire them. They don't give up what their beliefs are. I have already said this is a democratic country, and it's a good one, where you can say you're wrong and where I can say I'm right. There's got to be a compromise somewhere.

With that, I think I'm over my ten minutes anyway. I wish to thank you people for listening to my peers, the Chiefs from the Maa-nulth Nations and their needs and aspirations. We all have the same. That, I believe, is why we can work together the way we have been doing for the last four or five years. That's through the way we listen to each other.

[Nuu-chah-nulth was spoken.]

I'm not going to translate that, but it is good.

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