First Urban Treaty Ratified Under the BC Treaty Commission

Canada's first urban treaty was ratified by the Tsawwassen First Nation on July 25, 2007. Despite needing the approval of only 50% of the registered voting population, the Huu-ay-aht First Nations voted 90% in favour of negotiating the treaty under the British Columbia Treaty Commission Process.

The BC Treaty Commission was established in 1992 through an agreement between the Government of Canada, the Province of British Columbia and First Nations (at the First Nations Summit). The Commission was designed to "advance negotiations and facilitate fair and durable treaties, " [1] and its primary goals are facilitation, funding and public education.

The province of BC is unique with respect to treaties in part, because in most provinces, treaties with First Nations were already established prior to Confederation. When BC joined Confederation in 1871 however, although fourteen treaties had been signed in Vancouver, Aboriginal title in the rest of the province remained unresolved. Therefore, the Commission was established in part to facilitate modern treaty negotiations.

This urban treaty is a significant achievement for the BC Treaty Commission given that it is the first one to be successfully ratified by the First Nation. Other modern treaties have come close but have ultimately not been successfully implemented. Currently, there are 47 other First Nations in negotiations with the Commission.

The agreement promises self-government, land, money, access to fisheries and forestry. It includes other economic opportunities valued at $145 million, and is expected to take effect in 2010. The agreement will be finalized once the agreement is approved by four other First Nations in the area, in a vote in October 2007.

Sources:

Monday July 30, 2007 Vancouver First Nation vote for self-government CTV.ca

BC Treaty Commission

[1] BC Treaty Commission