
NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release
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Ministry of Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation
Kitselas First Nation

Kitselas, British Columbia and Canada Celebrate Agreement-in-Principle

TERRACE – Kitselas First Nation and the governments of B.C. and Canada have reached a major milestone in the B.C. treaty process with the signing of an Agreement-in-Principle.

John Rustad, British Columbia’s Minister of Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation, and Joe Bevan, Chief of Kitselas, signed the Agreement-in-Principle during a ceremony today in the First Nation community.

Modern treaties are an important tool to advance reconciliation and economic development for First Nations and all British Columbians.

The Kitselas Agreement-in-Principle provides for 36,158 hectares of land east of Terrace, and a transfer of \$34.7 million (to be adjusted for inflation), once a Final Agreement is reached.

The Agreement-in-Principle covers a variety of topics including governance, taxation and resources (forestry, wildlife, water, subsurface resources). Processes for the First Nation transition from an Indian Act band to self-governing treaty First Nation are also set out in the Agreement-in-Principle.

Now that the Agreement-in-Principle has been signed, Final Agreement negotiations will formally begin.

Quotes:

John Rustad, Minister of Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation –

“Kitselas is an important partner with the Province on a number of initiatives – environmental stewardship, as a supporter of sustainable development of the LNG opportunity and as a nation firmly on the path to treaty. This Agreement-in-Principle is a generational effort that lays the groundwork for meaningful reconciliation, self-determination and economic prosperity for the Kitselas community to the benefit all British Columbians.”

Joe Bevan, Chief of Kitselas –

“It has been a longer road getting to this stage than we expected but we have waited much longer, generations, to regain our self-governance. We realize this is a challenging process for all parties and are pleased with the commitment that the province and Canada have made in moving this along. Kitselas has seen significant growth in the past couple of years and we foresee greater involvement in the economy and more control over our members’ futures. A treaty agreement will be an important pillar in us building a strong Nation once again.”

Quick Facts:

- Kitselas has co-ordinated efforts and shared resources at a single negotiating table with Kitsumkalum First Nation (both are North Coast Tsimshian First Nations) to complete two separate Agreements-in-Principle.
- Kitselas has approximately 635 registered members, approximately 45% of whom live on reserve.
- Kitselas community members voted to approve their Agreement-in-Principle in February 2013.
- A 2009 report by PricewaterhouseCoopers concluded that completing treaties with First Nations could deliver more than \$10 billion in benefits to British Columbia's economy over the next 15 years.
- Progress in the B.C. treaty process includes:
 - Tsawwassen First Nation and the five Maa-nulth First Nations implementing their Final Agreements. Yale First Nation and Tla'amin Nation working toward implementing their respective Final Agreements.
 - Nine First Nations in Final Agreement negotiations: In-SHUCK-ch, K'omoks, Wuikinuxv, Yekooche and the Te'mexw Treaty Association First Nations of Songhees, Beecher Bay, T'Sou-ke, Malahat, Snaw-Naw-As. Thirteen First Nations in advanced Agreement-in-Principle negotiations.

Learn More:

For more information about the Kitselas: kitselas.com

For more information about the Ministry of Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation: gov.bc.ca/arr

For more about information about Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada: www.aadnc-aandc.gc.ca

For more about the B.C. Treaty Commission: bctreaty.net

A backgrounder follows.

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BACKGROUND

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AIP between Kitselas, British Columbia and Canada

An Agreement-in-Principle is the fourth stage of the six-stage B.C. treaty process.

A treaty will bring certainty with respect to Kitselas First Nation's rights to use, own and manage lands and resources within their traditional territory. It will provide the First Nation with modern governance tools to build strong and workable relationships with other governments, including federal, provincial and local governments.

The following outlines elements proposed in the Agreement-in-Principle.

Land:

The Kitselas Agreement-in-Principle proposes a land package of 36,158 hectares of land, including 1,069 hectares of Kitselas Indian reserve land, and 35,089 hectares of provincial Crown land.

All treaty land will be held in fee simple by Kitselas. Fee simple ownership will give the community opportunities for long-term economic benefits.

Kitselas signed an Incremental Treaty Agreement (ITA) with the B.C. government that will create near-term economic opportunities in Terrace and surrounding area, as well as for community and/or cultural purposes.

Kitselas received three parcels of provincial Crown land, totalling approximately 250 hectares under its ITA. B.C. transferred the ITA lands to Kitselas in 2014.

Governance:

Under a treaty, Kitselas will operate within the framework of the Constitution of Canada and the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms will apply to the First Nation's government.

Kitselas will have its own constitution that will provide for the structure of their government. Under its constitution, the Kitselas government will be democratically elected and accountable.

After a transition period, with the exception of determining Indian status, the Indian Act will no longer apply to the First Nation, its lands or members. Instead, constitutionally protected self-government provisions will enable it to make decisions about matters related to the preservation of its culture, the exercise of its treaty rights, and the operation of its government.

Kitselas will also have the authority to make laws necessary to manage treaty settlement lands, matters internal to the community and integral to its culture, and for the provision of social and other services to the First Nation members or people living on treaty settlement land.

Federal and provincial law will also apply on treaty settlement lands. The treaty will set out which law prevails if a Kitselas law conflicts with a federal or provincial law.

Financial Components:

The Agreement-in-Principle proposes a transfer of \$34.7 million, to be adjusted for inflation from the first Quarter of 2012 to the treaty effective date.

Resource Harvesting Rights:

Kitselas will have the right to harvest plants, wildlife and migratory birds for food, social and ceremonial purposes within Harvest Areas as defined in the treaty. These rights will be subject to conservation measures, public health and public safety regulations.

Fisheries:

The Agreement-in-Principle provides that fisheries will be discussed during Final Agreement negotiations.

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