

## **Angry Native Leaders Threaten Blockades:**

Beefs about Treaty Prompt Warnings About Highways, Ferries and Games

Jeff Rud and Lindsay Kines, Times Colonist staff

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An angry group of B.C. native leaders threatened yesterday to disrupt ferries and blockade roads during the coming months and even target the 2010 Winter Olympics if provincial and federal governments aren't prepared to be more flexible in treaty negotiations.

The chiefs rallied a group of native protesters estimated at 300 outside the legislature while, inside the buildings, the B.C. Liberal government celebrated a near-completed treaty with a small Lower Mainland First Nation.

The protesters had various reasons for opposing the Tsawwassen treaty, including claims that it overlaps the traditional territories of several First Nations who are signatories to the Douglas Treaty of 1852.

But a key sticking point is the insistence of both Ottawa and the B.C. government that any treaties signed must include an extinguishment of native rights to remain untaxed as well as the transfer of any settlement land to provincial jurisdiction.

Robert Morales, a spokesman for the Unity Protocol Group which represents 50 disgruntled First Nations at 16 treaty tables across B.C., threatened repeats of a blockade this past May when the group delayed ferry traffic on a Queen of Chilliwack sailing from Nanaimo's Departure Bay for 40 minutes.

"We are prepared to do that again," said Morales, the chief negotiator for the Hul'qumi'num Treaty Group.

"We are prepared to block the ferries. We are prepared to block the highways. We are prepared to go to the courts and do what is necessary in order to get justice, and in order to get our rights recognized."

Speakers also promised to "march on the Olympic city" in 2010 if Ottawa and the provincial government aren't prepared to move off their hard lines.

"We're here to stand together at a time of crisis," said Doug Kelly, chief responsible for intergovernmental relations with the Sto:lo Tribal Council.

"The time for talk is long gone. The time is to act."

"We need to make sure that when the world comes to visit in 2010, that they hear the kinds of things that are taking place in our communities."

Protesters yesterday carried signs with slogans such as "All is Not Well in B.C.," "No to Genocide" and "We Demand Fairness." Elder Tom Sampson of the Tsartlip First Nation,

one of the Douglas Treaty group, said: "We've become slaves. Our children are still committing suicide."

Various groups opposing the current treaty process -- which has produced just one deal after 14 years and \$1 billion-- have banded together and are considering legal action to force governments to negotiate "in good faith."

Morales said opponents object to government insistence that only five per cent of traditional territory is on the table, that First Nations would have to extinguish their rights on the rest of the territory, and that revenue-sharing, private property, and self-determination are not on the table.

"We are prepared to do what we can -- to do all that we can -- in order to change that," he said.

Union of B.C. Indian Chiefs president Stewart Phillip said yesterday was just the start of what he promised will be an "intense campaign over the next couple of years."

But Premier Gordon Campbell downplayed the threats of angry native leaders, even though they claim, in total, to represent more than 140 of B.C.'s 203 First Nations.

"I encourage people to come forward with positive recommendations about how we can improve the treaty process," Campbell said when asked if he was worried about militant First Nations action.

"I understand the frustration that First Nations leaders may have. I think we have to constantly try to find the way that we can improve on the lives of First Nations people and close those gaps. The way to do that, I think, is positively and constructively."

Campbell said his government is making progress on closing gaps for First Nations in areas such as health, education and economic development.

"I think it's important to recognize that Grand Chief Stewart Phillip doesn't agree with the treaty process. He didn't agree with it when it started and today he still doesn't agree with it," Campbell said. "I understand that, but there are some chiefs that are working very hard to create a treaty to provide the platform to move their communities forward. ... We encourage those who want to sign treaties. Those who don't we'll encourage them to find other ways to close the gaps -- economic, social, health and educational."

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