

Board Game Unravels Confusing Treaty Lingo

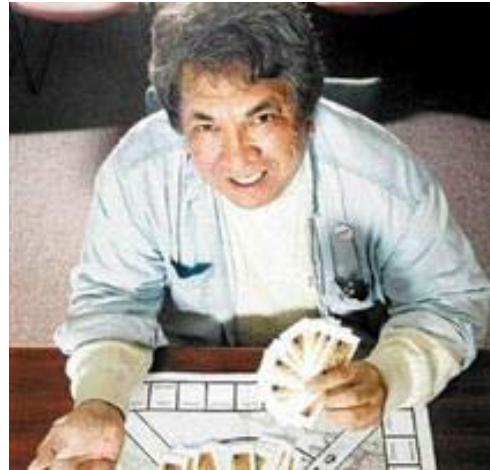
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Quick, throw the dice. Hey, you've landed on Xwulqw'selu. Now define capacity building and move your game piece to the next square in a quest for the big prize -- the inner circle with a treaty.

The Hul'qumi'num Treaty Group wants to inject some fun into learning about treaty talks by unravelling the incomprehensible bureaucratese and acronyms used at treaty meetings.

The Treaty Board Game is the brainchild of Joey Caro, treaty group communications manager, who has sat through too many meetings where aboriginal and non-aboriginal audiences have stared in blank incomprehension as speakers throw around phrases such as "land based jurisdictional model" and "S.87 tax exemption."



CREDIT: Debra Brash, Times Colonist

Joey Caro, communications manager for the Hul'qumi'num Treaty Group, shows off the board game he designed to help educate people about the treaty process.

"People are having trouble understanding the terms, and I thought this was an easier way for them to pick it up," said Caro, who believes it is the first time in B.C. that a board game has been used as a treaty educational tool.

"You go to a meeting and speak in acronyms. It's like speaking in tongues."

For good measure, Caro is also throwing in a history lesson.

Squares around the edge of the game board have the names of traditional Hul'qumi'num villages, some of which are unfamiliar, even to members of the six First Nations that make up the treaty group.

The Hul'qumi'num Treaty Group, made up of Cowichan, Chemainus, Penelakut, Lyackson, Halalt and Lake Cowichan nations, entered the treaty process in 1993 and has been stuck in Stage 4, the agreement in principle stage, almost ever since.

Efforts are being made to break through the deadlock, but it is the stage where most bands have met stumbling blocks, with 41 of 48 sets of negotiations in B.C. stuck at Stage 4.

"The first stages are pretty easy to progress through, but Stage 4 is where the challenges are because that's the template for the final agreement," Caro said.

One of the jokes around the Treaty Board Game is that it will take at least 14 years to play, Caro said.

As an illustration of the slow progress of treaties, the playing cards are decorated with elaborate details from a woven blanket worn by a Coast Salish chief who, in 1906, was one of several chiefs who went as a delegation to King Edward VII to talk about treaties.

So far, 500 copies of the game have been produced and will be distributed to aboriginal and non-aboriginal groups.

The cost is about \$20,000 and funding has come from several sources, but not from the provincial government, said Caro, who would like to double the number of games being distributed. "We'd like a wider audience. It's an important question," he said.

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