

'Day of action' urges treaty talks

Groups from across B.C. say blockades could start if negotiations don't see progress soon

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The Daily News

Friday, May 04, 2007

The gathering of representatives of First Nations from across B.C. in Nanaimo on Saturday is meant as a "shot across the bow" of both the provincial and federal governments to get on with stalled treaty negotiations, says spokesman Robert Morales.

Morales is a leader of the First Nation Unity Protocol group of more than 60 First Nations, including the Snuneymuxw, who signed an agreement last year in Nanaimo stating they would work together to spur treaty negotiations.

He said Nanaimo's event is expected to be attended by hundreds of First Nation people.

Morales said the Nanaimo event, which will see canoes arriving in Departure Bay at 9:30 a.m. before speeches by First Nation leaders begin, will be the first "day of action" that could eventually lead to blockades if senior levels of government don't soon remove obstacles to settling treaties.

"We haven't seen any progress in the treaty negotiations so we're sending a message that things could soon heat up across the province," he said.

"Both the federal and provincial governments have taken an attitude that one size fits all in the many treaty negotiations underway and we should take it or leave it and that's not acceptable to us. We want real negotiations and signed treaties."

As well as members of the Unity Protocol Group, Morales said Saturday's event will also include speeches from B.C. regional chief Sean Atleo of the Assembly of First Nations and Stewart Philip, president of the Union of B.C. Indian Chiefs.

Morales said the Snuneymuxw First Nation has "gone to the wall" in their treaty negotiations.

"The Snuneymuxw are as frustrated as anyone that their negotiations are not moving forward," he said.

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