

Snuneymuxw First Nation



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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Saturday, 12 November 2016

Nanaimo, BC/Snuneymuxw Territory: Snuneymuxw Citizens Ratify Largest Specific Claim in BC History

“On behalf of the Snuneymuxw First Nation, I am happy to announce the result of our citizen’s ratification vote on our settlement agreement with Canada for the loss of our 79-acre Indian reserve in downtown Nanaimo which was unlawfully taken by the crown in the 1880s. Today, our people have voted nearly unanimously to accept the terms of the settlement agreement and trust agreement,” said Acting Chief of the Snuneymuxw First Nation Douglas White III Kwulasultun.

The settlement amount is \$49,148,121.00 – the largest specific claim settlement in BC history by a factor of five. The loss of this major Indian reserve of 79 acres in the middle of the city of Nanaimo has profoundly impacted the Snuneymuxw people and Nation. Today, only 1/3 of our citizens live on-reserve in our community for lack of land and we have been deprived over the past century and longer of the potential economic benefit of these lands. The loss has contributed to the harsh reality that the Snuneymuxw have the smallest Indian reserve land base per capita in the country. “The settlement cannot change the past, and how that past has structured our present reality. But it does provide Snuneymuxw with a transformative infusion of resources to address the significant needs of our Nation,” added Acting Chief White.

Councillor Doug White II said, “We wish to honour the work of our elders who first raised the issue with our chief and council in the late 1980s. Late Chief Robert Thomas and his council directed that historical and legal research be undertaken in relation to the loss, which was submitted to Specific Claims Canada in 1992.”

Canada accepted the claim for negotiation in 2003, after having undertaken their own research and legal analysis that confirmed the veracity of the claim. Over the past couple of years, Snuneymuxw and Canada reached a settlement and negotiated the final language of the settlement agreement. Snuneymuxw, with the support of a community driven committee, crafted a community trust to receive the settlement amount.

The official results were announced by the Chief Electoral Officer Theresa Marion upon conclusion of the ballot count. The result is as follows:

- 848 total votes were cast out of 1312 eligible voters (64.6% turnout);
- 828 voted "YES" to approve the settlement (98.1%);
- 16 voted "NO" (1.9%); and,
- 4 ballots were spoiled.

Councillor Erralyn Thomas said "We now begin the hard work of the next chapter of making our Nation whole – by executing the settlement agreement and receiving the funds into our trust. We understand that a conservative estimate of the amount of time it will take to receive the funds from Canada is approximately 8 to 12 months. We will be pushing hard to get this important work done as soon as possible. We will be taking immediate steps to establish the trust and get it ready for the hard work it will be doing over generations to provide ongoing benefits to members of our Nation."

Acting Chief White added, "Tonight, our people have taken a historic step to ratify an agreement that strikes at the core of our relationship with Canada. Real harm was done to our Nation and citizens with the loss of this reserve, known as Thlap'qwan, and this settlement partially addresses that loss. We acknowledge Indigenous and Northern Affairs Minister Carolyn Bennett and her staff for their leadership and work in making this day possible."

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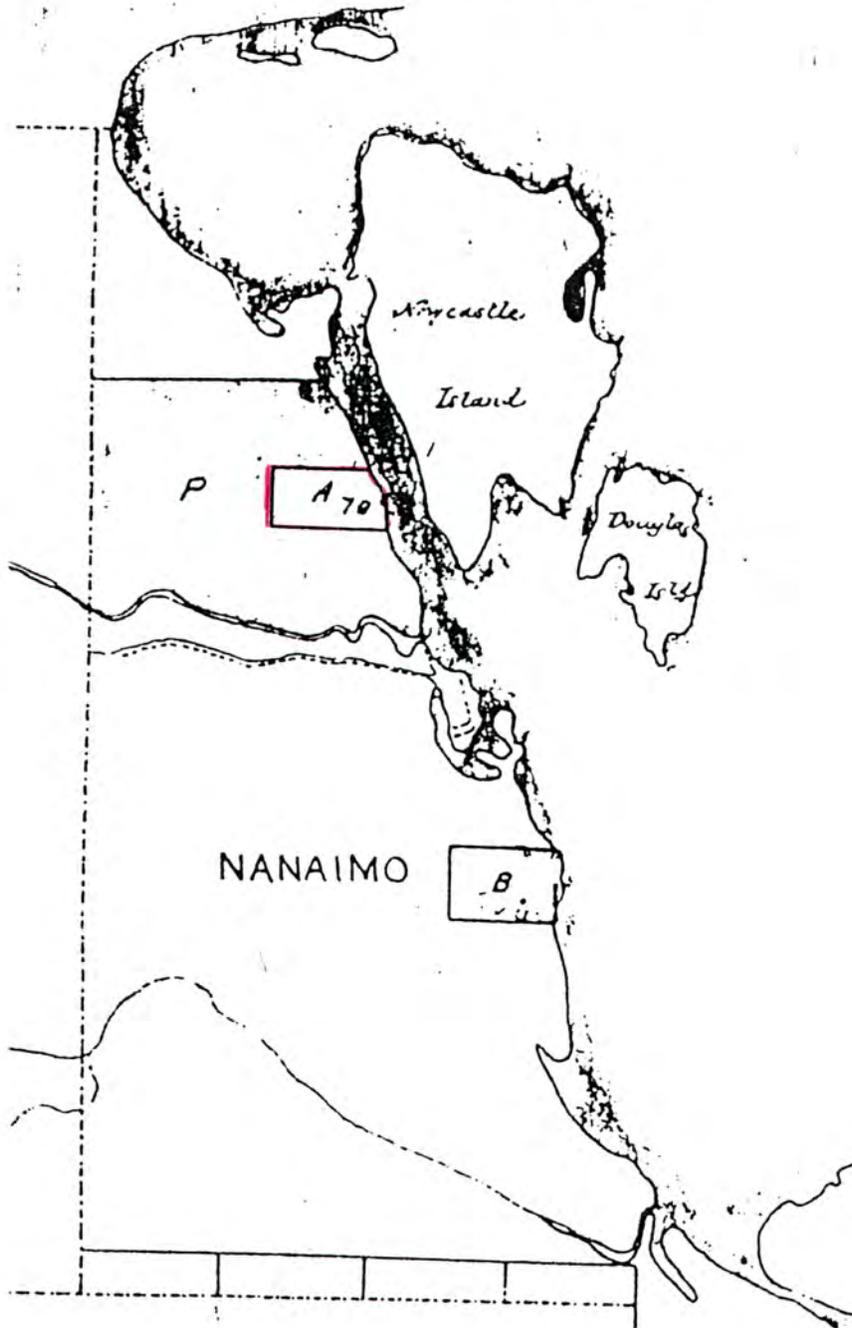
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BACKGROUND MATERIAL

1. 1860 Pearse Map showing the Indian Reserve at issue in the Settlement labelled as “A 79”.
2. NRC Map showing overlay of estimated reserve boundary on contemporary downtown Nanaimo.

Pearse Sketch attached to letter to Douglas, March 28, 1860 showing lands reserved from HBC Grant.





MP/Can. Obj. only shown. 78 acres parcel shown...
MP/Can. 78 acres parcel shown. 78 acres parcel shown...
MP/Can. 78 acres parcel shown. 78 acres parcel shown...
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