

Treaty process proceeds despite uncertainties

By CAM MCALPINE

Free Press staff writer

Community representatives in the treaty-making process met Wednesday for the first time since the Delgamuukw decision.

The Supreme Court of Canada handed down its decision on the Gitxan-Wet'suwet'en land claims case last month in what has come to be known as the Delgamuukw decision.

But the only thing members of the Prince George Treaty Advisory Committee

(PGTAC) could agree on with regards to what the historic ruling will mean to the treaty process in B.C. is that no one is really sure what it means.

No two groups – native or non-native – seem able to agree on how it will affect the land claims process, says Terry Burgess, chair of the PGTAC.

"The whole morning (Wednesday) was spent mostly discussing the confusion about Delgamuukw, but no conclusions were reached," he says.

'Interests will change throughout the process and new issues will come up that need to be brought to the table.'

TERRY BURGESS

Until some legal sense is made of the decision, it will be business as usual, says Mr. Burgess.

Three members of the committee will be heading to Vancouver on April 2 to study

Delgamuukw in a workshop involving the Union of B.C. Municipalities and Treaty Advisory Committees from across the province.

Meanwhile, the group did manage to adopt its "Statement-of-Interest" during Wednesday's meeting.

The statement-of-interest outlines points of negotiation the PGTAC feels will have an impact on local governments and communities. The document then explains what the PGTAC's interests are and the desired outcome, point by point, of

the treaty-making process.

Mr. Burgess says he welcomes public input on this statement as it is meant to be a reflection of the community's interest in the process.

"It is a dynamic and changing process," says Mr. Burgess. "Interests will change throughout the process and new issues will come up that need to be brought to the table."

The statement-of-interest will now be available to all members of the public within the negotiating area – covering treaty talks with each of

the Cheslatta, Carrier Sekani, Yekooche and Lheidli T'enh bands.

A synopsis of the statement, as well as general information on the PGTAC and the treaty-making process, will be distributed through community newspapers throughout the negotiating area, including *The Free Press*, between March 24 and 26.

The full statement-of-interest is available from the offices of the Regional District of Fraser-Fort George. Call Karla at 960-4416 for more information.

NEWSBRIEFS

► Regional district on the move

The old Native Friendship Centre property is finally getting sold off. Not all at once, but bit by bit.

The Regional District of Fraser-Fort George is in the process of buying the 1.13 acre lot across the street from the Friendship Centre's old location at 1st and George.

The sale should be complete by March 30, pending the receipt of a certificate of compliance from the Ministry of the Environment, says Anne Hogan, regional district administrator. The purchase price for the property is \$650,000.

Ms. Hogan says the move was made after it was decided the regional district had outgrown its current offices at 4th and Queensway.

The regional district will not be packing boxes, however, until a proposed office building is completed at the new site, says Ms. Hogan. No timeline has been set for that development.

► Recallers getting impatient

Recall organizers had hoped the judicial review of their failed recall petition would nearly be over.

But it looks like the legal process is far from complete.

Recall Ramsey lawyer Bruce Hallors says his clients had hoped to have the matter before the courts on March 10. However a date for the review has not been set at this time.

"I have trouble with (how long this is taking)," says Shelly Lawlor, an organizer of the movement to recall Prince George North MLA Paul Ramsey. "What's the hold up? Let's do it."

The length the review will also depend on what the court will take into consideration. If the review simply sticks to interpreting the legislation Mr. Hallors says it could be over in a day.

However Mr. Hallors says if the courts want to go through the names of each individual who recallers say shouldn't be on the list, the process could be lengthy.

"We would have to prove that every one of thousands of names shouldn't be on there and that could take time," he says.

Recall organizers are filing for the judicial review of their petition on the grounds that an outdated voter's list is to blame for its failure.

► Municipal Act goes modern

City Manager George Paul and City Councillor Cliff Dezell attended a two-day symposium, hosted by the Union of B.C. Municipalities last week, addressing the need to reform the Municipal Act.

"It's the largest statute in B.C.," says Mr. Paul. "It's based on a lot of archaic principles. It has been amended piecemeal for decades. It makes references to archaic details. It even has sections on how to control pigeons."

Most municipalities agree the Act gives too much power to the province and not enough control to the municipalities. The intent of the reforms will be to provide cities more flexibility.

As a result of the symposium Municipal Affairs Minister Jenny Kwan has agreed to an ambitious agenda for change.

"They've made a strong commitment to modernize the act," says Mr. Paul.

MARCH IN Sale

Easter Bookings

* Fresh * Smoked * Special
Turkeys Hams Cuts

Over
20 Great
Selections of
Freezer
Packs

Monthly
Payment
Plan
OAC

Fresh, Frozen
Pork Chops
End to End

Grade A Quality
Cross Rib Roast

Fresh, Lean Boneless
Pork Leg Roast

\$2.99
lb

 Cooked Turkey Breast \$1.19 100 gr	PURIFIED WATER 5 Gallon Refill \$3.99	 Farmer or Colby Cheese \$1.19 100 gr
---	---	--

Homesteader Meats Ltd.

556 North Nechako Rd 563-1002
Open 7 am to 6 pm Monday to Saturday