

# Lheidli T'enneh focus on specific issues

## Band chooses not to make complete counter-offer

The Lheidli T'enneh offer scheduled for Wednesday was expected to focus on aboriginal rights and self-government than land and cash, says a provincial government spokesperson.

"There's a lot more to the treaty than land and restitution," says Bryan Wallis of the B.C. government.

The Wednesday response has been toned down from a Lheidli counter-offer to what is now being called a full response to the government's first land and cash offer.

"We're not prepared to go into the actual land and cash offer," Lheidli band councillor Ron Seymour said at press time. The plan instead is to focus on issues in the deal, from timber rights to hunting, fishing and self-government.

The Lheidli, Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs, and the

federal Department of Indian Affairs came to Prince George yesterday to discuss Lheidli perspectives on the government's August offer.

Still Bill Wilson, the chief negotiator for the Lheidli has gone on record as saying the land and cash offer, as offered, was not only insulting it was dishonest.

Most people don't realize that the Lheidli require enough land base to support themselves, he says.

"The Lheidli will depend on this process for the rest of their lives. The Department of Indian Affairs only depends on its pay cheque."

Government negotiators met Tuesday evening to discuss the deal, informing the Prince George and Northern Interior Treaty Advisory Committees about the deal the night before the main table discussion.

When the government made its first offer in August, Chief Barry Seymour rejected an offer giving his people \$7.5 million and just over 2,900 hectares of land — most of which sits on partially logged land east and north of Shelley. Remaining land offered includes the Clesbaoneecheck

Reserve on the Nechako River, the Solaquo Reserve lands at Chilako River and an additional 240 hectare parcel at the airport, more commonly known as the Experimental Farm. One hectare of cemetery lands in the middle of Fort George Park would be fee simple.

He argued then, the Lheidli needed a package of productive land and money that will sustain the Lheidli at \$28,464, the average per capita income the latest Stats Canada census says the people of Prince George enjoy.

In August, the Lheidli also criticized the offer for the government's "lack of vision" on the issue of governance, hunting, fishing and water rights. The Lheidli's agreement to negotiated rights on set plots of land, all be it more than the reserves they now inhabit, as a "bigger reserve approach to treaty making." They wanted the government to reconcile native rights throughout the huge tract of land east of Vanderhoof to the Alberta border claimed in the Lheidli's traditional territory. Under the government's initial land and cash offer, all First Nations rights would be extinguished outside settlement lands.

## Bereavement Centre gets okay from city

City council will pave the way to make room for the Prince George Hospice Society's bereavement centre on Ferry Avenue.

The hospice society says it needs more room than its current site, the Rotary Hospice House, can provide and bought the adjacent property in September, 1999.

Organizers then applied for and got \$199,880 from a BC 2000 Community Spirit Grant to renovate the current house.

The Rotary Hospice House has five beds for short term and final care for people who are terminally ill.

The adjacent bereavement centre is meant to provide support to those who are grieving — from individual counselling sessions to northern outreach programs, to education and an emergency palliative response team. It will hold meeting rooms for up to 60 people, and on-site parking for 50 vehicles.

Councillor Cliff Dezell suggested a need for permit parking in the area, once the house is built.

The land, at 1506 Ferry Avenue, passed first and second reading on a rezoning application Monday that would move the land out of urban residential zoning in the current Official Community Plan to public institutional land. A public hearing and third reading will be scheduled at a later date.

Councillor Don Basserman did not vote on the rezoning, citing a conflict of interest.



Dezell

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