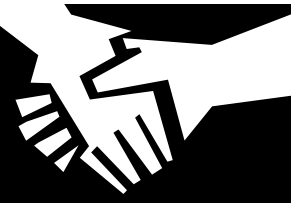


Nisga'a final agreement

ISSUES & RESPONSES



Public Consultation

THE ISSUE:

Critics have argued that the public wasn't adequately consulted during Nisga'a negotiations. So why should British Columbians now think that the Final Agreement represents the interests of ordinary people?

THE ANSWER:

Negotiators know that a treaty settlement wouldn't work unless it takes the interests of British Columbians as a whole into account. That's why public consultation is an essential part of the negotiation process.

Throughout the process of the Nisga'a negotiations, all three Parties have consulted the public and third parties and kept them informed through public consultations and meetings and through briefings to both the Treaty Negotiation Advisory Committee and regional advisory committees. Some 250 consultation meetings and public events concerning the Nisga'a negotiations have taken place since late 1991.

MORE TO CONSIDER:

Why should British Columbians believe that what they said in consultation sessions and at public meetings had any influence on negotiations?

Every section of the Final Agreement includes provisions that reflect the concerns British Columbians brought to the attention of government negotiators. For example:

- certainty provisions ensure that the Treaty will be final;
- wildlife conservation and entitlements will give all citizens a share of the harvest;
- the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* and the *Criminal Code* will apply on Nisga'a Lands to protect all Canadians—Nisga'a and others;
- the Nisga'a will pay taxes in the same way that other British Columbians do after a transition period of eight years for sales taxes and 12 years for income taxes; and
- federal and provincial Cabinet ministers will retain their overall authority to manage fish and wildlife, with conservation as the top priority.

more...



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But how can governments say they listened to the public if we're hearing opposition to the deal now?

The topics covered in the Nisga'a Final Agreement are complex and detailed. The negotiators heard a wide range of views on these issues, including opposing views on the same subject. The negotiators' goal was to act fairly and justly and, at the same time, to balance the range of interests expressed by people who were consulted.

Will average British Columbians have any opportunity to say what they think of the Final Agreement before it becomes a legally binding Treaty?

Yes. Before the Final Agreement becomes a treaty, it must be ratified not only by the Nisga'a, but also by the B.C. Legislature and by Parliament. As with any other issue that comes before an elected body, voters will have the opportunity to influence the debate by sharing any concerns they may have with their elected representatives.

Find more information on the Nisga'a Final Agreement at www.inac.gc.ca, or contact:

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