

Nisga'a Landholding Transition Act

NEW AIYANSH, BC, Oct. 30 /CNW/ - At its October 2009 sitting, Wilp Si'ayuukhl Nisga'a (WSN), the legislative body of Nisga'a Lisims Government, passed the Nisga'a Landholding Transition Act.

The Nisga'a Landholding Transition Act gives Nisga'a citizens the opportunity to own their residential properties in fee simple. A Nisga'a citizen who obtains fee simple title to their residential property under the Act will subsequently be able to mortgage their property as security for a loan, or to transfer, bequeath, lease or sell their property, to any person.

At a roundtable discussion in 2006, WSN considered ways in which Nisga'a citizens hold their residential properties. It identified the current restrictive system of Nisga'a Village Entitlements and Nisga'a Nation Entitlements as a barrier to economic development. Over the ensuing three years, Nisga'a communities in the Nass Valley and in Vancouver, Prince Rupert and Terrace were consulted, and numerous legislative options were considered, culminating in the introduction of the new Act.

"This is a significant step towards true self government. It is a process for increasing economic prosperity for our people," stated Nelson Leeson, President of the Nisga'a Nation. "It is important for us to be able to find ways of building capacity for our people so that they can stand on their own."

Under the Act, Nisga'a citizens will have the opportunity to obtain the fee simple title to residentially zoned properties of a specified size within Nisga'a Villages. Initially, the eligible properties are expected to make up approximately 1 square kilometer of the approximately 2,000 square kilometers of Nisga'a Lands. Although a Nisga'a citizen who obtains the fee simple title to their property under the Act will subsequently be able to transfer their property to any person, the property will always remain Nisga'a Lands and be subject to Nisga'a laws under the Nisga'a Final Agreement.

The Nisga'a Nation includes approximately 6,400 Nisga'a citizens.