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NISGA'A LISIMS GOVERNMENT

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Our Journey Forward: Celebrating 10 Years of the Nisga'a Treaty

NEW AIYANSH, BC, May 11 /CNW/ - The Nisga'a Nation today celebrates the 10th Anniversary of the Nisga'a Final Agreement.

"The Nisga'a Nation is very proud of 10 years of self-government," proclaimed President Mitchell Stevens. "The Nisga'a Final Agreement brought prosperity and pride for the Nisga'a people and to the community of Terrace."

On May 11, 2000, the Nisga'a Final Agreement came into effect. On that day, the Indian Act ceased to apply to the Nisga'a people (except for the purpose of Indian registration) and, for the first time in modern history the Nisga'a people had the legal authority to conduct their own affairs. The treaty ended the uncertainty regarding land ownership and opened the door for joint economic initiatives in the development of the Nisga'a Nation's natural resources.

"This landmark agreement is a shining example of the benefits that modern treaties can bring to First Nations people and their neighbours," stated the Honourable Chuck Strahl, Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development Canada and Federal Interlocutor for Métis and Non-Status Indians. "There is no question that the Nisga'a Final Agreement marked a new beginning for the Nisga'a people and the Nass Valley as a whole. As the work to implement this groundbreaking treaty continues, Canada remains committed to working with the Nisga'a and the Province to make progress on shared goals."

"This is a very significant day for the Province and for the Nisga'a Nation - a day to celebrate the arrival of a new future, one that holds hope, prosperity and pride," said Minister Abbott. "On behalf of all British Columbians, I am very pleased to acknowledge the decade of progress realized by the Nisga'a people since their treaty took effect ten years ago today."

The Nisga'a Treaty was the first modern-day treaty in BC and the fourteenth modern treaty negotiated in Canada since 1976.

Through provisions in the Nisga'a Final Agreement, the Nisga'a Lisims Government has the ability to pass laws on a broad range of matters that directly affect the lives of Nisga'a people. For example, the Nisga'a Landholding Transition Act gives Nisga'a citizens the opportunity to own their residential properties.

"Building economic prosperity has been key element to our success as a nation," stated President Stevens. "The Nisga'a Landholding Transition Act is a significant step towards true self-government and 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."

"The Nisga'a people have realized the dream of self government, are making their own decisions and shaping their own lives free from the Indian Act," said Chief Commissioner Sophie Pierre, of the BC Treaty Commission. "The priority for the Treaty Commission is completing treaties so that other First Nations, too, may enjoy the benefits and opportunities of self government. Nisga'a Lisims Government is a great help in this work: generous with their time, welcoming to other First Nations and willing to share their experiences with treaty making and governance."

The Nisga'a Treaty benefits all Canadians. News of the Nisga'a Final Agreement has traveled far beyond the Nass Valley - across British Columbia, Canada, and around the world. It demonstrates that governments and First Nations can, in good faith, work together to forge a more secure future for everyone.

"As a nation we look forward to ten more years of prosperity and relationship building with our neighbours," said President Stevens.

For more information, please visit our Web site, <http://tenyears.nnkn.ca>

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