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## Treaty stalling frustrates Snuneymuxw

**Robert Barron**

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The Snuneymuxw First Nation is running out of patience with a bogged-down treaty process that it has been participating in for years.

Murray Browne, an aboriginal rights lawyer from the firm of Woodward & Co who works with Snuneymuxw on treaty and specific claims, said the band agrees with statements from the leadership of the First Nations Summit, which represents dozens of First Nations in the ongoing treaty negotiations, that there is "little light at the end of the tunnel" at this point for the negotiations to be successful.

The deadlock in negotiations revolves around the constitutional status of treaty lands, governance, the co-management of traditional territories and other issues.

George Abbott, B.C.'s Minister of Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation, said he "appreciates the frustrations" of the First Nations with the slow pace of the negotiations but he expects a "break in the logjam" could come soon.

"We find ourselves at an incredibly fragile and dangerous point in time as many B.C. First Nations attempt to negotiate fair, just and honourable treaties with Canada and B.C.," said Grand Chief Edward John, a spokesman for the First Nations Summit. "Only two agreements have been reached after 16 years of negotiations."

John said that failure for governments to "act now" and reach substantive progress in the treaty negotiations could result in the "dissolution of the treaty process."

Browne said senior levels of government are refusing to negotiate with the Snuneymuxw based on the legalities of the Douglas Treaty, signed in 1854.

"The Snuneymuxw members and their council keep asking why they should have faith in a new treaty when the governments keep violating the Douglas Treaty," he said.

Abbott said the province has been "working intently" with the federal government in the past few weeks to try and resolve a number of outstanding issues.

"Are we moving quickly enough? No," he said. "However, we are making modest progress and now we need to build up some momentum to bring the negotiations to successful conclusions."

RBarron@nanaimodailynews.com

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