

**PRE-ANNOUNCEMENT RESEARCH**

**— FOCUS GROUP REPORT —**

Prepared For: B.C. Ministry of Aboriginal  
Affairs

Prepared By: Angus Reid Group, Inc.  
Vancouver Division

May 1993

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

1.0	INTRODUCTION .....	1
2.0	METHODOLOGY .....	2
3.0	TOP-OF-MIND DISCUSSIONS .....	5
4.0	REACTIONS TO ANNOUNCEMENT .....	8
4.1	UNDERSTANDING OF THE ANNOUNCEMENT .....	8
4.2	REACTIONS TO THE ANNOUNCEMENT .....	10
5.0	PERCEPTIONS OF NEED TO SETTLE LAND CLAIMS .....	14
6.0	PERCEPTIONS OF THE ROLE OF THE B.C. GOVERNMENT .....	17
7.0	REACTIONS TO SIGNS OF PROGRESS .....	19
APPENDIX		
	- Screener	
	- Moderator's Guide	
	- Announcement	

## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

The B.C. Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs is planning a major announcement concerning a joint federal-provincial agreement regarding aboriginal land claims settlements. Recognising the effect the announcement may have on public opinion in the province towards aboriginal issues, the Ministry has requested a wave of preliminary research to identify potential public reactions to the pending announcement.

The research has two main objectives:

- Identify the range of possible public reactions to the pending developments to help the Ministry develop an optimal positioning strategy for the announcement and anticipate possible responses among key public constituencies; and
- Establish a baseline reading of public opinion on key aboriginal issues prior to the announcement in order to assess the impact of the announcement on public attitudes towards aboriginal policy.

In order to meet these research objectives, the Angus Reid Group conducted a series of six focus groups in three British Columbia centres, two each in Vancouver, Penticton, and Williams Lake. Focus groups were held between May 17th and 20th, 1993.

Qualitative results from focus group discussions will be used to prepare the questionnaire in the pre-announcement telephone survey of the B.C. population.

The following report outlines the main results from focus group discussions, and discusses communications implications for the Ministry's upcoming announcement. In Section 2, we briefly outline the methodology used for the research. Section 3 discusses the top-of-mind discussions around "native and aboriginal issues". In Section 4, we detail reactions to the announcement, from both a comprehension and substance point of view. Section 5 outlines perceptions of the need to settle land claims. In Section 6, we explore perceptions of the role of the provincial government. Finally, Section 7 details comments made on examples of progress in the area of aboriginal affairs.

## 2.0 METHODOLOGY

To successfully meet all of the objectives of the research, the Angus Reid Group conducted six (6) focus groups in three centres around the province - Vancouver, Penticton, and Williams Lake. Two groups were held in each centre. The centres were chosen by the B.C. Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs.

Recruitment was effected to ensure that participants held "middle-of-the-road" attitudes and perceptions on aboriginal issues. It was important to target people in the population who would be key for building a public coalition in support of the aboriginal agenda.

In order to do reach this middle population segment, the Angus Reid Group recruited participants according to a psychographic segmentation of the Canadian population it completed for its 1991 syndicated study on Aboriginal Peoples. The two segments recruited for groups in each centre included "Cautious Sympathizers" and "Liberal Pragmatists".

Liberal Pragmatists represent one-quarter (25%) of the Canadian population, and have a mindset that is basically "liberal" about Natives as peoples, but is also "pragmatic" about how to deal with the Native Agenda. Specific attitudinal tendencies for Liberal Pragmatists include:

- Celebrate Canada's ethnic diversity.
- Believe in a caring society.
- Less of an insistence on self-reliance.
- Reformist/activist.
- Split on whether Natives or the "system" is to blame for the current state of affairs.
- Believe that Natives have become too dependent on the system.
- Less likely to accept the argument that Native land was stolen.
- Generally favourable impressions of Natives.
- Irritated by international comparisons (i.e. Canada treats Natives like South Africans treat Blacks).

Cautious Sympathizers represent one-fifth (20%) of the Canadian population, and have generally supportive feelings towards native Canadians. They identify with the problems faced by aboriginal peoples, and other disenfranchised peoples, which they believe have been exacerbated by the social systems set up by the government. Specific attitudinal tendencies for Cautious Sympathizers include:

- Feel anxiety about people from different cultures.
- Less socially active, and unlikely to work for reform.
- Little strength in their convictions.
- Feel disenfranchised.
- Warm feelings towards aboriginal peoples.
- Believe that aboriginal peoples are capable of making their way if given the chance.
- Impressed by aboriginals' special relationship to the land.
- Place much of blame for native problems on the system.
- Believe aboriginals too dependent on government.
- Less willing to make comparisons between Canada's aboriginals and blacks in South Africa.

To locate these two segments in the three centres, random telephone calls were made to potential participants. A screening questionnaire (appended to this report) was then administered. Screener questions were asked according to a psychographic segmentation model, and then each respondent's answers were tested using a computer model to determine whether or not an individual fell into one of the two segments. Only those individuals who qualified were asked to participate. Qualified respondents were offered \$50.00 to attend a group.

A total of 60 participants were recruited for the focus groups.

The group discussions were moderated by an experienced moderator from the Angus Reid Group - Dr. Daniel Savas, Senior Research Director, Vancouver. Groups were held in fully-equipped focus group facilities in Vancouver, and in hotel meeting rooms in Penticton and Williams Lake.

Participants were informed at the start of each group about audio taping. They were also assured that their individual identities would remain confidential in the reporting of the results. Each session lasted approximately two hours and was attended by 8-10 participants.

The announcement itself was presented to participants as a mock newspaper article. In the Vancouver groups, the article was typed on a 8 1/2 x 11 sheet of paper in regular font. To make the announcement seem as real as possible, the font was changed to appear more like a newspaper article for the groups in Williams Lake and Penticton.

It should be noted by readers that the focus group approach to research seeks to explore individual reactions and opinions in order to elicit a full range of views from participants. Therefore, the results of the groups are strictly qualitative, and should be viewed as directional rather than conclusive.

## **MODERATOR'S GUIDE**

(6-1265-02)

### **1. INTRODUCTION**

- Explain focus group
- Confidentiality
- Taping, One-way glass
- Give own opinions - Start sentences with "I"
- No right/wrong answers
- No consensus necessary
- Questions?

### **2. TOP-OF-MIND DISCUSSION**

- When I say "native or aboriginal issues" what is the first thing which comes to mind?
  - Participants write one sentence answer on paper with no discussion
  - Participants read their sentence
  - Discussion: Why was this the first thing that came to mind?

### 3. COST-SHARING FORMULA

(Submit news release for participants to read. Moderator reads aloud.)

- In your own words, what do you think this cost-sharing formula means?

- Do you understand it? What needs to be explained?

(Moderator clarifies general issues.)

- What are your reactions to the announcement?

- Do you think it is a good thing? a bad thing? Why/Why not?
  - Does the fact that an agreement has been reached give you confidence in the process?

- Is there a winner/loser with this announcement? Who? Why? (Probe: all British Columbians, aboriginal peoples, 3rd parties, Canadians)

- If the announcement were applauded by aboriginal leaders, what would that mean to you?

- Is it important that aboriginal leaders support the announcement? Why? Why not?

- Who would have to make an announcement on land claims issues before you would accept it as a good thing for the province, aboriginal peoples, and non-aboriginal British Columbians? (Probe: B.C. aboriginal leaders, B.C. government officials, federal government officials, Prime Minister, Premier, local leadership - mayor, business leaders)

- Why would this(these) person(s) be more appropriate? (Probe: Believeability? Trustworthiness? Speaks for a particular population? Which one?)

- What are your main concerns with this announcement? Would this announcement affect you and your family? How?

- What could be done to provide you assurances that these concerns would be met?



- What do you think is missing from the announcement? What else would you like to know?
- Do you see this announcement as making progress in land claims issues? Why?/Why not?
- If we were to design our own cost-sharing formula to resolve land claims issues, what would we put in it? (Probe: For each element - Why would we put that in?)

#### 4. LAND CLAIMS

- Do you think there is a need to settle land claims? Why? Why not?

Probe:

- provide economic stability
- end uncertainty
- right historic wrongs
- provide equality of opportunity

- If there is no settlement, what can be done to end the uncertainty?
- What do you think would be the political and economic impact of no settlement? (Probe: provincial government's obligation to settle, economic insecurity, with investors hesitant to bring their money into the province)

- Will land claims settlements affect you and your family? your community? How?

- What are your concerns if settlements are reached?

Probe:

- higher taxes-cost of settlement
- loss of private lands
- loss of access to public lands
- loss of jobs
- creation of "sovereign states"

## 5. GOVERNMENT PERFORMANCE

- What do you think is the role of the provincial government in settling land claims? (Probe: protect interests of British Columbians)
  - Who should the provincial government represent? Why? How should it do this?
  - Does the provincial government have the primary responsibility? Why? Why not?
- Whose side do you think the provincial government is on in resolving land claims issues? Do you feel it represents your interests? Why? Why not?
- What kinds of assurances would be needed from the provincial government to make land claims settlement more acceptable to you? Why is this a specific concern of yours?
- Do you think the B.C. government has been making any efforts to address your concerns with land claims issues? What kind of efforts?
  - How would you rate the B.C. government's performance in resolving land claims? Why do you say that?

## 6. PROGRESS REPORT ON ABORIGINAL ISSUES

Now, I'm going to give you some concrete examples of some things that have occurred over the past year in the area of aboriginal affairs. I'd like to get your reaction to some of them.

- The setting up of a Treaty Commission to oversee land claims negotiations between the federal and provincial government and aboriginal peoples. The Commission is composed of representatives from the provincial government, the federal government, and First Nations' leaders.
  - Do you think this is a good thing? bad thing? Why? Why not?
  - Is this a sign of progress? Why? Why not?
  - Does this give you confidence that your concerns are being addressed?

- Both the provincial government and the federal government are working together to resolve land claims issues?
  - Do you think this is a good thing? bad thing? Why? Why not?
  - Is this a sign of progress? Why? Why not?
  - Does this give you confidence that your concerns are being addressed?
  
- In recognition of the many parties that have a direct interest in the outcome of negotiations, because they may be affected by land claims settlements, a third party consultation process has been underway for over a year. Third parties include people like resource companies, municipalities, trade unions, fish and wildlife organisations.
  - Do you think this is a good thing? bad thing? Why? Why not?
  - Is this a sign of progress? Why? Why not?
  - Does this give you confidence that your concerns are being addressed?
  
- The provincial government is taking the lead role in land claims negotiations.
  - Do you think this is a good thing? bad thing? Why? Why not?
  - Is this a sign of progress? Why? Why not?
  - Does this give you confidence that your concerns are being addressed?

# BC, Ottawa reach cost-sharing agreement on treaty settlements

VANCOUVER

Copyright

Copyright

## *NEWS RELEASE*

*BC, OTTAWA REACH COST-SHARING AGREEMENT ON TREATY SETTLEMENTS*

**VANCOUVER** - Copyright  
Copyright

### 3.0 TOP-OF-MIND DISCUSSIONS

The term "native or aboriginal issues" signified a number of specific things for participants in all three centres. The fact that there seems to be general agreement around the province on the substance of this term suggests a population which has a fairly well-defined framework when it comes to this particular topic. Most are cognizant of the complexity of the issues, and of the intricate inter-relationships between specific items within their framework.

In most cases, the visibility given these issues in the media is responsible for their salience amongst members of the public.

What are the components of the public's framework for "native or aboriginal issues"?

#### 1. Land Claims

Land claims take a prominent place in the public's interpretation of "native or aboriginal issues". Specifically, they focus on the "tremendous amount of money" these claims signify, and of the potential for increased taxes. Underlying their comments is a concern for the future of their children and grandchildren.

Some feel, however, that a successful resolution of the land claims issue would provide for a more promising future, because "it would be over and done with."

Encompassed under the land claims issue is a concern for access to public lands. This was raised more directly by those living in Williams Lake and Penticton who have had "hands-on" experience with barricades and roadblocks. Many mentioned the possibility of violence in their areas as a potential off-shoot of land claims negotiations.

## 2. Native Self-Government

Native self-government also falls under framework defined by "native or aboriginal issues". Here, participants mention the possibility of aboriginal peoples having their own separate government, being "separate from Canada". There is a general worry that this could happen, and, equally, a desire to prevent it from happening.

## 3. Social Development and Native Self-sufficiency

This is an important top-of-mind item in participants overall interpretation of "native or aboriginal issues". This particular aspect stands out prominently amongst all others in discussions. Participants are genuinely concerned about the "dependency" status of aboriginal peoples, and see a great need to have them "stand on their own". Driving this sentiment is a call for "social justice" borne of a perception that aboriginal peoples have suffered social and economic injustices, and "deserve something in return". There is somewhat of a moral imperative here to "right a historic wrong" which also conditions general desire to "do good by the natives".

## 4. Integration into Canadian Society

This aspect follows naturally out of participants' desire for social and economic justice. Their compassion notwithstanding, many feel that encouraging native self-sufficiency would also benefit non-aboriginals, because there would be less of a need to give them "special privileges"; they could then become "Canadians like the rest of us". Indeed, not far beneath the surface of the compassion shared by most participants lies a resentment towards aboriginal peoples for the perceived special treatment they receive in the system as it is now. This resentment emerged in a more definite fashion in Williams Lake and Penticton where contact with aboriginal communities is far more immediate than in Vancouver. The resentment seems due mostly to a desire that "we all be Canadians", "pay taxes", and "contribute to society". It reflects a concern for "equality", something which drives participants' sentiments around a need for the social, political, and economic integration of aboriginal peoples into the Canadian mainstream.

## 5. Conflict of Rights

The different stances of aboriginal peoples and white society regarding who owns the land is another aspect participants see under the term "native or aboriginal issues". Here, it is a question for them of deciding upon how it is possible in present day society to determine, morally, whether the aboriginal peoples hold some special right to the land because they were "here first" or whether the land belongs to white society due to the "right of conquest".

## 6. Problems

Many participants used the general terms "problems" when defining what they saw under the idea "aboriginal issues". This reflected an underlying concern with the fact that very little progress has been made in resolving the wide-ranging and complex issues involved.



## 4.0 REACTIONS TO ANNOUNCEMENT

Participants were asked to give their comments on the announcement of a federal-provincial cost-sharing agreement for land claims settlements. In this section, we outline what participants understood in the announcement, how they reacted to it, who they saw as winners and losers in the announcement, and what concerns they had with the announcement.

### 4.1 UNDERSTANDING OF THE ANNOUNCEMENT

Participants tended to grasp the overall thrust of the announcement that the federal and provincial government had come to some form of an agreement regarding land claims settlements. There was, however, a general tendency for participants to interpret the agreement as meaning both governments had in fact "settled" land claims. In a sense, participants did not really "see" the agreement as such; they tended to look beyond it, falsely interpreting the real thrust of the announcement. From this incorrect interpretation emerged a cry for more details, and a general comment that the announcement "said nothing".

Participants did not really understand or see the role of the B.C. Treaty Commission in land claims negotiations. Some confused it with a Royal Commission. Questions focussed on its membership (even though the announcement was quite explicit on this front), who would appoint members, what the Commission would do (even though the announcement talked of it "overseeing" the negotiating process), and how it would work. Some confused it with a Royal Commission.

Very few participants grasped the full nature of the cost-sharing agreement aspect in the announcement. Though most understood that the federal and provincial governments would give money and Crown lands, respectively, a small number saw the equal cost-sharing for third-party compensation.

In addition, the whole thrust of the announcement around third parties was generally absent from discussions, until brought up by the moderator. It is possible that the compensation and consultation issues concerning third parties were either unclearly presented in the release or inadequately positioned near the bottom of the newspaper article.

## Implications

Generally-speaking, as presented in the groups, the news release seemed to lack the necessary elements for a successful launch of the Ministry's communications strategy. We see this both in terms of clarity of issues and grasp of substance.

If the Ministry is to derive maximum benefits from its announcement, it must be aware that British Columbians are perhaps so desirous of a resolution of aboriginal issues, that any favourable announcement in the area of land claims, may be interpreted as actual settlements being reached. If this occurs, the announcement may raise more questions and create confusion. There is thus a need for caution so as to avoid raising expectations. The announcement should clearly present what the agreement is, and how it will benefit the land claims negotiations process to follow. In this way, the Ministry will position itself and the government as participant in the positive step forward.

The Ministry should be prepared to give more details in its announcement. Without the details it risks two things: downplaying the importance of the agreement as such, and showing the population that a significant step forward has been made towards moving the land claims negotiations process forward. In discussing the importance of the agreement, the Ministry should explain why such an agreement came about, and why it is so critical to the process. That the agreement is a step forward would follow logically from this, if the Ministry explained the next steps. Here, a more developed exposition of the B.C. Treaty Commission, the third-party consultation process, and the cost-sharing agreements could be delved into somewhat more fully.

For maximum communications benefits, the Ministry may want to proceed in three stages. First, announce the cost-sharing agreement. Second, discuss the province's participation in the B.C. Treaty Commission. Third, outline the various components of the third-party consultation process, and the related compensation issues.

## 4.2 REACTIONS TO THE ANNOUNCEMENT

In this section, we outline comments made by participants about various aspects of the announcements.

### 1. The Agreement

Overall, participants reacted favourably to the announcement, seeing it as "a starting point" in resolving land claims issues. Their overwhelming desire to see an end to the "problems" they associate with this issue drives much of the reaction towards the announcement. Many felt that it indicated "something was finally getting done".

Despite the positive reactions, many held firm reservations about the process, because "it's been done before, and nothing ever happened." There is a strong sense, borne of perceived past failure and raised expectations, that something concrete will have to happen before anyone will have confidence in the outcome of this agreement. This scepticism is quite strong in all centres, and plays against the credibility that any benefits will emerge from the announcement.

### 2. Cost

Prominent in the minds of most participants was the cost of possible land claims settlements coming out of this announcement. Many felt they could not react positively or negatively to the announcement until they had more information about the potential costs. Some interpreted the announcement to mean that the two governments were "giving away the shop" to the aboriginal peoples, without getting anything in return. Included in their concern for cost were the amounts involved in compensating third parties. "Where is all the money going to come from?" was a frequent question in the groups. The fact that the federal government would be providing the money for settlements did not seem to mitigate any of the fears of increased taxes and higher cost to individuals to settle land claims. Participants generally saw the money as "coming from our pockets anyway".

Most participants felt that the "taxpayer" would be the biggest loser in the announcement, because of the ultimate cost associated with land claims settlements. Some believed,

however, that smaller interest groups or "citizens groups" would probably lose also, because their interests would compete unfavourably with those of big business and big labour. Safeguards would be needed to prevent this.

### 3. B.C. Treaty Commission

Once explained to them, participants liked the idea of a B.C. Treaty Commission, because it engendered some confidence that all of the important players in the land claims settlement process would be involved. For them, this would enhance the likelihood of success, and thus of an end to the disputes. Importantly, participants felt that aboriginal peoples would not be left out - "everyone would be playing on a level playing field"; there would be equality between all players.

Some participants worried, however, about the ability of aboriginal representatives on the Commission to negotiate effectively. They did not want to see aboriginal peoples "walked on" by the high-powered government negotiators.

Moreover, many wondered aloud about the legitimacy of aboriginal representatives on the Commission, fearing that they not speak for a particular constituency and thereby hinder the negotiations. To avoid this happening, it was important for participants that aboriginal peoples accept the negotiators appointed to the Commission.

In addition, participants liked the fact that the Commission defined the roles and responsibilities of each player, and that "everyone agreed" to the way the Commission would work - "Thank God, at least they're going to talk". It is this framework for moving ahead which generates hope amongst participants that land claims settlements might succeed.

Some participants did question, however, the roles to be played by the federal, provincial, and aboriginal representatives on the Commission. A few, concerned about objective decision-making, suggested that someone from outside the province be appointed as the ultimate authority on the Commission.

A few participants wondered about the actual status of the First Nations' representatives on the B.C. Treaty Commission, that is, whether or not they would be treated as a "government". Some felt this would be the only way to proceed, others were quite against giving aboriginal peoples a separate status.

#### **4. Third-Party Consultation and Compensation**

The third-party compensation and consultation aspects of the announcement generated favourable comments, but also raised some concerns among participants. Overall, most felt that having third parties involved in the process was "essential" to its success, because the views were needed from those who would be affected by land claims settlements.

However, many doubted that third parties themselves would accept that governments represent their interests at the bargaining table. Most doubted that the government could even do so, because it had its own interests to protect. When told that third parties had agreed to this framework, many seemed to accept it more willingly, though some still saw the complexity of the issues as an impediment to success. What worried the sceptics most was the possibility that third parties, such as the large timber and mining interests, pull out of the process in the event of an unfavourable settlement.

#### **5. Economic Development of Aboriginal Communities**

Some participants saw the possibility of improving the chances for aboriginal social and economic development, and thus contributing to an overall stable economic climate for more favourable to investment. Only a few, however, actually understood the means by which settling land claims would provide economic benefits to the province. Many feared that giving money and land to aboriginal peoples would only contribute to more waste and compounded social problems. This particular viewpoint was more prominent in Williams Lake and Penticton than in Vancouver and, as such, seems to be conditioned by the immediacy of problems in those areas.

Generally-speaking, participants felt that, while aboriginal peoples would be the immediate winner in this announcement, ultimately, all British Columbians would be winners, because the process would hopefully generate settlements which would provide a solid basis upon which to build more self-sufficient and productive aboriginal communities.

### Implications

Given that most participants perceived the agreement reached as a framework for negotiations to start and move ahead, the B.C. Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs will need to take every opportunity to sell the announcement as the "starting point" in a process which will facilitate land claims negotiations. The B.C. Treaty Commission must be part and parcel of this positioning, front and centre as the one body which will ensure that everyone's interests are taken into consideration. As the Commission's objectivity is somewhat of a concern, some effort should be made to present its representatives as credible appointees.

To counter the expected scepticism towards the agreement, the Ministry might need to define more clearly the expected outcomes, and even propose some timelines for eventual agreements. If British Columbians had some concrete examples of the work the Commission would be undertaking in the near future, it would give them some confidence in the process announced.

Some explanation needs to be given of the third-party consultation process, that is, who is involved, what third parties are participating, and what results have occurred to this point. If anything, information about this process would build confidence that eventual settlements would be acceptable to all parties involved.

Concerns about the potential costs generated from the announcement need to be addressed if the agreement is to have any credibility. While participants are generally prepared to accept land claims settlements, they do want to know how much it will affect them financially, and they want to know what the settlements will mean for the future: will the payments to aboriginal peoples end with settlements? what are they asking for? what do they get now? These questions emerge from a desire to end uncertainty; anything the Ministry can do to provide some certainty will help generate positive reactions to the announcement.

## 5.0 PERCEPTIONS OF NEED TO SETTLE LAND CLAIMS

Overall, participants saw a definite need to settle land claims. Very few felt that the status quo was acceptable.

### 1. End to Uncertainty

For most, the most important issue was to end the uncertainty, that things finally get resolved so that "we can move on to other things". Three aspects lay underneath this concern to end uncertainty.

Firstly, participants believed there was an immediacy around land claims. Unless settlements were reached, nothing else could really move ahead - "The situation would not improve unless land claims are settled."

Secondly, there exists a latent fear of possible outbreaks in violence which would threaten the social peace. This is particularly true in areas like Williams Lake and Penticton which have already lived through a number of incidents of unrest. Many participants worried of "another Oka" in their area, and felt there was a real possibility of an escalation of violence to comparable levels.

Thirdly, participants felt that the land claims issue represents a millstone on the backs of Canadian society. The issue has been "plaguing us for years", and there is simply a desire to rid the society of it.

## 2. Economic Stability

Economic stability constitutes another reason for the need to settle land claims. Most participants believed that the instability of the land claims issues prevented investors from investing confidently in the B.C. economy. This was particularly the case for foreign investors.

Some people asserted that settling land claims would encourage native economic development and thereby contribute to the provincial economy. However, many doubted the capabilities of aboriginal peoples in the field of entrepreneurship or did not understand the "trickle-down" effect of more productive aboriginal communities. This was more true in Williams Lake than in Vancouver or Penticton.

In addition, most participants did not really believe that money given by the federal government to aboriginal peoples for land claims settlements or to third party interests in the form of compensation would translate into direct economic benefits for British Columbia. Their doubts seemed to grow out of a perception that the cost to the taxpayer for settlements would far outweigh the money coming in, and a belief that the money provided from the federal government is "their money anyway". In addition, a few participants did not feel that aboriginal peoples would re-invest their money back into the province.

Despite these doubts about the economic benefits of settling land claims, people still tended to feel that settling land claims would hopefully reduce the burden on the Canadian taxpayer, by lifting the responsibility of providing for aboriginal peoples.

## 3. Righting a Historic Wrong

Righting a historic wrong, due to an underlying moral obligation, is a third reason participants identified to explain the need to settle land claims. Participants genuinely felt that aboriginal peoples have suffered injustices within non-aboriginal society, identifying the Indian Act as the main culprit. As a result, Canadians must do something to "make up for the past". Land claims is perceived to be a critical part of any positive action on this front.



#### 4. Reduce Aboriginal Peoples' Dependency

Helping to reduce the dependency of aboriginal peoples, and to enhance self-sufficiency is a fourth reason raised for settling land claims. Instead of being "wards of the state", aboriginal peoples can become part of the mainstream. There is a real desire amongst participants to promote the social, cultural, and economic development of aboriginal communities, because people do not like to see the injustice, and want aboriginal peoples to be part of their community.

#### 5. Concerns About Land Claims Settlements

Many people were concerned about the results of land claims settlements for all the expected reasons - higher taxes, loss of access to public lands, job loss, and the creation of separate status for aboriginal peoples. What is clear from the discussions, however, is that concerns seemed to outweighed by the desire to end uncertainty. People seemed driven by a desire to finally resolve this issue.

## 6.0 PERCEPTIONS OF THE ROLE OF THE B.C. GOVERNMENT

Participants believed that the provincial government's role at the negotiating table is to represent the interests of British Columbians. This included both aboriginals and non-aboriginals, and third parties likely to be affected by land claims settlements. Representation of interests meant that the government must be sure to "not give away the shop", but also, that the government ensure aboriginal peoples are fairly treated and walk away "satisfied".

The desire for fair and equal treatment of aboriginal peoples reflects participants' concerns that the negotiations actually settle something "for a change". There is a real preoccupation with ensuring that all agree to the process and to the outcome of negotiations. Any efforts to produce this agreement would be well-received.

Many participants asserted that the provincial government is only at the table to represent "its own interests". People feel somewhat disconnected from the political process to the point of not trusting their representatives to act in the best interests of the province. They are quite sceptical do not accept that an elected politician can work to get re-elected and make efforts to resolve key issues at the same time.

Some participants viewed the provincial government as a "mediator" in the negotiating process, helping to resolve land claims issues between aboriginal peoples and white society. Instead, they want someone who can "see both sides", and is "objective". Though this indicated a general lack of understanding of the fact that the provincial government had its own interests at stake in the negotiations, the desire for objectivity suggests people are looking for fairness in the process.

When asked to rate the provincial government's performance on aboriginal issues, few participants could think of anything specific the present government had accomplished. Hence, the rating was somewhat negative, due largely to a lack of information.

Some participants mentioned that action on aboriginal affairs had been part of the NDP election platform, but that little had been done since the election. Others remember "seeing the odd thing in the newspaper", but nothing specific was raised. Those in the focus groups who worked for government departments mentioned that they were aware of efforts to modify hiring practices so that more aboriginal candidates would be hired; others mentioned that new positions in the field of aboriginal affairs had also been created.

### Implications

The provincial government must present itself as a representative of all British Columbians in the land claims process. This suggests the Ministry must work to define its positions such that the aboriginal peoples are seen to be "included" in the larger B.C. society. All of B.C. must benefit.

In order to counteract possible scepticism, the Ministry must be careful to position itself in a "results-oriented" fashion. As more is accomplished, the sceptics will be silenced.

## 7.0 REACTIONS TO SIGNS OF PROGRESS

Participants were asked to comment on four examples of things which had occurred over the past few years in the area of aboriginal affairs: the creation of B.C. Treaty Commission, the fact that federal and provincial governments are working together to resolve land claims issues, the third-party consultation process, and the fact that the provincial government was taking the lead in land claims negotiations.

Generally-speaking, participants viewed all of these examples in a very favourable light, despite having held some reservations about them during earlier discussions. Most felt reassured that "something was getting done", that "this was a good starting point" to ending the land claims process. This optimism was balanced, however, by a "wait-and-see" attitude shared by many who were somewhat reluctant to fully embrace these efforts until some results were forthcoming.

### 1. B.C. Treaty Commission

The Commission is viewed as a good "starting point" and most see its creation as an indication that progress is being made. Importantly, however, the fact that the Commission is now in operation does not engender much confidence that the process will address many of the concerns people have about the land claims. The only thing they have confidence in is that something is finally happening to end the uncertainty. Most still prefer to see the results before passing judgement.

### 2. Federal-Provincial Cooperation

Participants were relieved to know that both levels of government were cooperating to resolve the land claims issue. Most felt that it was important that the governments be "talking, instead of fighting", because they held the "power to get things done." As major players in the game, they had to be part of the process in order for it to work.

### 3. Third-Party Consultation

Participants considered this consultation as essential to the success of land claims negotiations, because it was important to "get everybody's view, not just the government's and not just the Indians".

Nonetheless, many people wondered aloud why they had not heard about this process. There was a sense they felt somehow excluded from the process, because they had not been informed about it. Some went so far as to consider that the government was "hiding something" - "Is it confidential, secret?"

Participants were adamant that the government use the media to inform them about the consultation process.

### 4. Provincial Government Takes Lead Role

Most participants were satisfied that the provincial government was playing a greater role in resolving land claims. Many saw the government as being "closer to the people and to the issues", which made it essential that it be taking the lead role.

### Implications

The fact that most participants perceived these specific efforts positively as good starting points to move ahead in the aboriginal dossier suggests that the B.C. Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs can expect favourable reactions from its upcoming announcement. British Columbians are anxious to see something being done to resolve the land claims issues as a beginning to address broader concerns. However, the B.C. public wants to be informed, and kept in touch of the results of the negotiation and consultation processes. They expect their provincial government to make every effort to do so.

## **APPENDIX**

**- Screener -**  
**- Moderator's Guide -**  
**- Announcement -**

## SCREENER

ATTITUDES ON ABORIGINAL ISSUES  
(6-1255-02))

Hello, my name is \_\_\_\_\_ and I'm calling from the Angus Reid Group. We're a professional marketing research firm here in Vancouver that gathers public opinion from time to time on a variety of issues.

From time to time, we get opinions by sitting down and talking with a group of people. We are having one of these focus group discussions and I'm calling to see if someone in your household can participate. These sessions take about two hours and those who qualify and attend will receive \$50.00 cash as a token of our appreciation. I would like to ask you a few questions to see if you qualify.

## A. DEMOGRAPHICS

(SEX - DO NOT ASK)

MALE.....1 WATCH QUOTAS (50-50 SPLIT)  
FEMALE.....2

## 1. To begin with, into what category does your age fall?

Under 18 . . . . . 1 (THANK & TERMINATE)  
18-29 . . . . . 2 (WATCH QUOTAS - ONE-THIRD EACH)  
30-49 . . . . . 3 "  
50 + . . . . . 4 (Under recruit here if necessary)

## 2. Do you, or does any member of your household, currently work in any of the following occupations? (READ LIST)

An advertising agency.....1 -  
A market research company.....2 --> (IF YES TO ANY, THANK & TERMINATE)  
Radio or television station.....3 -  
A newspaper publisher.....4 -

## 3. And, what is the highest level of education that you have completed to date?

Non-University . . . . . 1 (MINIMUM 25%  
University . . . . . 2 UNIVERSITY)

## 4. Have you attended a focus group within the past 6 months?

Yes.....1 --> (THANK & TERMINATE)  
No.....2

5. I am going to read you a short list of statements, and I would like you to tell me how much you agree or disagree with each statement. (READ STATEMENT - ROTATE FROM X)  
Would that be strongly or moderately agree/disagree?

	AGREE STRONGLY	AGREE MODERATELY	DISAGREE MODERATELY	DISAGREE STRONGLY	(DK/ NS)
___ a) I would rather participate in than watch most activities . . . . .	1 . . . . .	2 . . . . .	3 . . . . .	4 . . . . .	9
___ b) I feel comfortable in most social situations . . . . .	1 . . . . .	2 . . . . .	3 . . . . .	4 . . . . .	9
___ c) I read the newspaper or listen to the news on the TV or the radio everyday . . . . .	1 . . . . .	2 . . . . .	3 . . . . .	4 . . . . .	9
___ d) I don't mind stating my opinion even if other people might not agree with me . . . . .	1 . . . . .	2 . . . . .	3 . . . . .	4 . . . . .	9

IF RESPONDENT AGREES WITH AT LEAST 3 OUT OF 4 STATEMENTS, CONTINUE.

IF RESPONDENT AGREES WITH 2 OR LESS, THANK & TERMINATE.



## B. PSYCHOGRAPHICS/VALUES

6. Here are some general descriptions of how different people approach life. Please tell me how you feel about each of these statements, on a scale of 1 to 7 where "1" means you disagree totally, and "7" means you agree completely. (ROTATE ITEMS FROM X)

		DISAGREE TOTALLY								AGREE COMPLETELY
___ a)	I consider myself more experimental than traditional . . . . .	1	. . . . .	2	. . . . .	3	. . . . .	4	. . . . .	5
										6 . . . . . 7
___ b)	I am uncomfortable in a room full of people from a different culture acting in a different way and speaking with strong accents . . . . .	1	. . . . .	2	. . . . .	3	. . . . .	4	. . . . .	5
										6 . . . . . 7
___ c)	Life should be enjoyed as much as possible today, without worrying about the future . . . . .	1	. . . . .	2	. . . . .	3	. . . . .	4	. . . . .	5
										6 . . . . . 7
___ d)	It's more important to understand my inner self than it is to be rich and successful . . . . .	1	. . . . .	2	. . . . .	3	. . . . .	4	. . . . .	5
										6 . . . . . 7
___ e)	The more money that is spent on helping out poorer people, the less they will want to help themselves . . . . .	1	. . . . .	2	. . . . .	3	. . . . .	4	. . . . .	5
										6 . . . . . 7
___ f)	I tend to voice my opinion even if it might make people angry . . . . .	1	. . . . .	2	. . . . .	3	. . . . .	4	. . . . .	5
										6 . . . . . 7
___ g)	I keep trying to change things because I feel a personal responsibility to make the world a better place . . . . .	1	. . . . .	2	. . . . .	3	. . . . .	4	. . . . .	5
										6 . . . . . 7

## C. GENERAL ATTITUDES AND PERCEPTIONS

7. We would like to get a general idea of how Canadians feel about aboriginal peoples and different aspects of aboriginal life and culture. Here are a number of different statements people might make. Please tell me how you feel about each of these statements, on a scale of 1 to 7 where 1 means you disagree totally and 7 means you agree completely. (ROTATE ITEMS FROM X)

		DISAGREE TOTALLY					AGREE COMPLETELY				
___ a)	Most of the problems of aboriginal peoples are brought on by themselves . . . . .	1	2	3	4	5	6	7			
___ b)	Aboriginal peoples are hard-working and industrious, and capable of earning their way if given a chance . . . . .	1	2	3	4	5	6	7			
___ c)	Indian and Inuit land was stolen from them and they should be given as much compensation for damages as possible . . . . .	1	2	3	4	5	6	7			
___ d)	Canada's aboriginal people are too dependent on government . . . . .	1	2	3	4	5	6	7			
___ e)	Aboriginal leaders and governments can be trusted to treat all their people fairly and equally . . . . .	1	2	3	4	5	6	7			
___ f)	Disputes between Canada and aboriginal people should be dealt with by an international United Nations committee . . . . .	1	2	3	4	5	6	7			
___ g)	The Canadian government should pay the full cost of any negotiations or arbitration necessary to resolve disputes with aboriginals . . . . .	1	2	3	4	5	6	7			
___ h)	No matter what the government does to settle native land claims, native people will always demand more . . . . .	1	2	3	4	5	6	7			

## C. ABORIGINAL ISSUES

8. Do you think any specific measures should be taken to make voting easier for aboriginal people who do not speak one of the official languages - let's say by using native languages or symbols on voting information and ballots?

Yes . . . . .	1
No . . . . .	2
(DK/NS) . . . . .	9

9. There has been disagreement between some of Canada's native leaders and the federal government over what should be provided for in native land claims.

Some native leaders think land claim settlements should include: full financial compensation for the loss of the use of land in the past, and the natives would still have ownership of the land.

The federal, on the other hand, say they are willing to provide financial compensation, but once that is paid, the government, not the natives, would own the land.

Which of these two broad positions regarding who would own the land after settlement is reached is closest to how you feel?

Natives - they own it . . . . .	1
Government . . . . .	2
(DK/NS) . . . . .	9

10. Generally-speaking, do you think Canada's native people are being reasonable or unreasonable in terms of their current land claims?

Reasonable . . . . .	1
Unreasonable . . . . .	2
(DK/NS) . . . . .	9

11. Generally-speaking, do you feel that the federal government have been too generous, generous, fair, unfair, or very unfair in their response to native land claims?

Too generous . . . . .	1
Generous . . . . .	2
Fair . . . . .	3
Unfair . . . . .	4
Very unfair . . . . .	5
(DK/NS) . . . . .	9

12. Which of the following three broad statements best describes your feelings? (READ STATEMENTS - ROTATE FROM X)

— Aboriginal peoples in Canada have a basic, natural, and inherent right to self-government . . . . .	1
— Aboriginal peoples can establish self-government but only as delegated by the government . . . . .	2
— Aboriginal peoples have no more right to self-government than other ethnic groups in Canada . . . . .	3
(DK/NS) . . . . .	9

13. In the past, native Indians have been involved in demonstrations across Canada, and the whole native issue received considerable public attention. One of the things they have done is (READ ITEM). Do you support or oppose that action? Would that be strongly or moderately support/oppose?

	SUPPORT STRONGLY	SUPPORT MODERATELY	OPPOSE MODERATELY	OPPOSE STRONGLY	(OK/ NS)
--	---------------------	-----------------------	----------------------	--------------------	-------------

Aboriginal people  
delaying completion  
of a resource mega-  
project, such as the  
second James Bay  
Hydro electricity  
project . . . . .

1 . . . . . 2 . . . . . 3 . . . . . 4 . . . . . 9

14. Have the events of the past couple of years as far as this whole native issue is concerned, made you more sympathetic towards aboriginal people's concerns, have they made you less sympathetic, or have recent events not really changed the way you feel about aboriginal people's concerns?

More sympathetic . . . . . 1  
Not change . . . . . 2  
Less sympathetic . . . . . 3  
(OK/NS) . . . . . 9

That completes the questions I have to ask. Your responses will now be entered into a computer to determine if you qualify to attend the discussion group. I will call back in ten minutes with the results.

May I please have your name \_\_\_\_\_

(COMPUTER ENTRY)

(IF RESPONDENT INELIGIBLE, OR QUOTA FULL)

Hello, Mr./Ms. \_\_\_\_\_. We have entered the responses from your questionnaire, but unfortunately the quota for the group into which you fall has been filled. However, thank you for your time and cooperation.

(IF RESPONDENT QUALIFIES)

Hello, Mr./Ms. \_\_\_\_\_. You qualify to attend our discussion group being held (INSERT APPROPRIATE TIME, DATE, PLACE FROM LIST ON FOLLOWING PAGE). As mentioned, the discussion will take approximately two hours and those who attend will receive \$50.00 in appreciation for their participation.

Can you attend?

TELEPHONE NUMBER (DAY): \_\_\_\_\_

(NIGHT): \_\_\_\_\_

RECRUITED BY: \_\_\_\_\_ DATE: \_\_\_\_\_

CONFIRMED BY: \_\_\_\_\_ DATE: \_\_\_\_\_

Thank you. You qualify to attend the session on:

Vancouver - May 17, 1993: 6pm - Liberal Pragmatists  
May 17, 1993: 8pm - Cautious Sympathizers

Penticton - May 18, 1993: 6pm - Liberal Pragmatists  
May 18, 1993: 8pm - Cautious Sympathizers

Williams Lake - May 19, 1993: 6pm - Liberal Pragmatists  
May 19, 1993: 8pm - Cautious Sympathizers

As I mentioned, the discussion will be about 2 hours long and you will receive \$50.00 as a token of our appreciation.

Someone from our office will be calling you back to confirm that you will be able to attend.

Could I please have your name and phone number where we can reach you?

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS: \_\_\_\_\_

PHONE (DAY): \_\_\_\_\_

(EVENING): \_\_\_\_\_

GIVE DIRECTIONS TO ANGUS REID GROUP OFFICES