

Sage Mesa resident delivers KVR petition to environment minister

■ **RDOS chairman says Penticton Indian Band's concerns over KVR right-of-way should also be considered.**

By Joyce Langerak
Southern Exposure

SAGE MESA - A Sage Mesa resident has collected more than 2,800 signatures in support of having the province buy a section of the Kettle Valley Railway bed from Summerland to Penticton.

The land, expropriated from the Penticton Indian Band earlier this century is owned by the Canadian Pacific Railway which no longer runs trains there. Carolann Perrie presented 2,819 signatures in support of the idea to Minister of Environment, Lands and Parks, Cathy McGregor in Penticton recently. The petition calls for the province to buy the rail bed and preserve it as a multi-purpose recreational corridor for all to use.

Penticton Band plans to use KVR for future access road

A lawyer for the Penticton Indian Band says the current owners of the Kettle Valley Railway bed from the Summerland Research Station to Penticton are in no position to sell it to the province because the land is currently the subject of legal action.

Presently in the hands of the Canadian Pacific Railway, the land was expropriated from the band under the federal Railway Act earlier this century, said band lawyer Ray Richardson of North Vancouver.

Now that it is no longer being used by the CPR, the band wants it to revert back to band ownership, just as the Penticton Airport land will revert back to the band should it ever shut down.

"We're speaking with CP to see if we can resolve it," said Richardson. "We are in negotiations with CP at this time." He hopes the matter will be settled out of court, but it's impossible to say when

In a press release, Perrie characterized the Sept. 24 meeting between herself, the minister, Regional District of Okanagan Similkameen and Summerland officials as "very positive."

"The Honorable Cathy McGregor and her ministry staff were very impressed with the 2,819 signatures on our petition and the interest it has created," said Perrie.

There were no members of the Penticton Indian Band at the meeting, even though the band is negotiating with the CPR and the federal government for return of the land.

The Regional District supports preservation of the corridor for future use, but that does not mean shutting out the Penticton Indian Band, said Roger Mayer, chairman of the RDOS. Mayer, who was at the meeting with the minister, noted the issue has only recently come before the board.

"The Regional District had a letter from the Summerland Chamber of Commerce expressing concern that the right-of-way be preserved from Summerland to Penticton for future expansion of the KVR," explained the chairman.

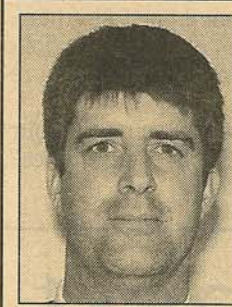
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The province has already bought much of the KVR rail bed to preserve it as a recreational corridor, said Ron Perrie, an RDOS director.

"All we're doing is making it known that residents want it returned as a recreational corridor," he said. "If it ever gets broken up, we'll never get it back."



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