GWICH'IN TRIBAL COUNCIL SELF GOVERNMENT

Self Government News

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Self-Government Negotiations Update
Rick Bennett—Gwich'in Negotiator

The Gwich'in and Inuvialuit self-government main table discussions with Canada and the GNWT take place approximately once a month. Since I started in November of 2005 there have been three sessions. The government parties are anxious to now the status of the Agreement in Principle from 2003.

The Gwich'in Tribal Council board of directors have confirmed that the Agreement in Principle is no longer valid or useful. Rather than building a new regional public government, negotiations will now focus on establishing an aboriginal Gwich'in government with the jurisdiction to tax developments taking place on Gwich'in lands.

Back row l-r: Ian McRae, Karen Snowshoe, Lila Erasmus, Ian Hamilton,
Front row l-r: Vince Teddy, Bob Simpson, Rick Bennett, Bill McGill

Also, it is planned to have the principals from each party meet in Inuvik this summer. This will involve Fred Carmichael, the federal Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, the territorial Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and the head of the IRC. The main table sessions coming up will be oriented towards making this high level meeting a success and a step towards having an agreement in two years (as Margaret said on the radio!)

Ian McRae, Vince Teddy, & Bob Simpson

Lila Erasmus & Ian McRae

Gwichya Gwich'in Council

I was hired as the self government coordinator in late November. I attended a "Team Building Workshop" the first week of work.

On my return to Tsiigehtchic I recruited about three youth who were interested in doing the Home Visits .

Margaret Gordon the Self Government Regional coordinator came and trained the youth on what Self Government will mean to the Gwich'in and how to answer their questions.

The Home Visit staff consists of Jaime Cardinal, Lori Ann Lennie, and Fred Andre.

I meet with the Home Visit staff and the Self Government Committee on a regular basis. We've appointed Fred Andre and Jaime Cardinal to the committee.

The home visit staff have been quite busy doing their home visits with the questionnaire and have been doing great. So far we've collected 58 interviews.

We are finding out that most people are aware of Self government but need to get more information so that their decision will be easy when it comes time to vote.

Self Government Coordinator Dan Andre & Chief Peter Ross

DAN ANDRE—PROFILE

Daniel Andre was born in Inuvik , N.T. in 1969. He grew up in the Travaillant Lake and Tree River areas within the Gwich'in Settlement Area. He flew by Cessna 185 to and from the camps at Tree River and Travaillant Lake to Inuvik for school with his siblings until he was about 14. After completing grade nine he returned to hunting, trapping and fishing full time with his father Gabe Andre from 1986-1989 and then from 1993-1998. He returns to his camp on the Mackenzie River every August to make dry fish for 6 weeks until the middle of September. He then became involved with developing land, wildlife and harvesting management plans with the co-management boards in the region as the RRC Coordinator. Dan has a strong connection to his cultural identity as a Gwich'in because of the many years he spent harvesting and living on the land. He was also employed as the Community Economic Development Officer and Executive Assistant to the Chief of the Gwichya Gwich'in Council. He dreams of going to the University of Victoria to study Geography. He is now enjoying the challenges of working as part of the Gwich'in Self Government team as the Coordinator for the community of Tsiigehtchic.

Tetlit Zheh Council

Since starting in November 2005 the office has been very busy with reorganizing files and with work plans for upcoming activities. The main focus is on the Constitution of which we have a Draft #3. This was worked on by the past TGC Self Government Committee who did workshops and consultations by surveys during the months of August and September. But due to financial constraints this stopped. We moved some monies around in the budget to continue the consultations and hopefully can have the community completed by the end of January. Then a new round of consultations will start with a different questionnaire.

In communications we do a 2 hour radio program each Monday from 10am-12pm with updates on activities to date. We have received good feedback as a result of the information brought forward on this program. We did some team building exercises with the other communities and this helps with the community staff as well. The updates are done on Negotiations, home visits, questionnaires, information sheets and the Terms of Reference for the Committee. A very important information item is the history leading up to Negotiations that is a real eye opener.

Self Government Coordinator —Wilbert Firth

Until next time take care and happy trails.

Wilbert Firth– Self Government Coordinator

Wilbert was born in Fort McPherson to Angus Firth and Mary Robert. He became involved with Land Use Planning in 1986 as a working group member. Wilbert was involved with Land Selection Mapping in 1988 and then was the Regional Negotiator for the Dene Métis Land Claim in 1989. He continued on with the Gwich'in Final Agreement as a Community Negotiator taking the lead on the Yukon 1990-91 negotiations. He later worked for Tetlit Gwich'in as the Band Manager in 1996-98.

In 2002 he put his name forward to run for Vice President of the Gwich'in Tribal Council and served for a two year term. He was hired in November as the Self Government Coordinator.

Wilbert would like to see the Gwich'in achieve Self Government and implement in a phased approach over time. The AIP must be negotiated with the inclusion of Taxation, Justice system where we have our own policing and judges. Include laws that controls who can go on our lands and trespass legislation to prosecute.

Chief Peter Ross & Chief Johnny Kay

Ehdiitat Gwich'in Council

The Ehdiitat Gwich'in Council would like to welcome Florence Furlong as the Coordinator for the Home Visit Program under the Self government program.

Florence joins Home Visit staff Rhonda John and Cora Leigh Simpson.

A second questionnaire will be introduced to the communities in the next couple of weeks.

Home Visit Staff

Rhonda John & Cora Simpson

Florence and the Home Visit staff will be attending a information session in Inuvik February 8-9.

This questionnaire will deal with the constitution. The Gwich'in constitution will be based on the answers we get back.

Florence, Rhonda and Cora will be going door to door getting feedback on this questionnaire.

Photos from Board of Directors meeting in Aklavik

President Fred Carmichael

James McDonald, John Carmichael, and James Edwards

VP Mary Ann Ross, Pres. Fred Carmichael and Gwich'in Negotiator Rick Bennett

Chief Charlie Furlong

Chief Richard Nerysoo, Tom Wright , Tom Williams and Chief Furlong

Nihtat Gwich'in Council

Shona Barbour the Special Advisor at the Inuvik Native Band has taken on a new position with the GNWT-Department of Education, Culture and Employment. The NGC advertised the position of Self Government Coordinator, although there were good applicants, it was decided that applicants had many different skills and that no one had the range of skills that were required for the position. The decision was to extend Cathy Coyen to full time hours as a Fieldworker. Shona will stay on to help draft the constitution by working in the evenings.

The Home Visit program is in full swing. We are finding out that people have positive things to say about the information they received and the opportunity to provide input into the self-government process. So far 120 homes have been visited. The completed questionnaires are then passed onto the Regional Coordinator so that she can tabulate the results which will be given out sometime in March.

We've been doing a lot of mail outs with information on the process of self government and updates.

In mid January we held an open house at the Beaufort Delta Self Government office located on Mackenzie Road for three days. We had a few beneficiaries come in to fill out the questionnaire and to get more information.

Open house at the Self Government office on Mackenzie Road

A second questionnaire will be starting in February and will end in March. The staff will be attending a training session on how to deliver this second questionnaire.

The Self Government committee meets once a month.

Work will continue on the constitution. A table of contents for the constitution has now been completed. A draft version will be completed by the end of February and that fieldworkers can begin to bring it out to community members in March.

Filling out questionnaire at the open house in January

The staff at the Self Government office would like to thank Shona for staying on to complete a draft of the constitution and to help Cathy out. We wish you the very best in your new job and please don't be a stranger.

Karen Snowshoe—Community Development Manager

Karen is a Gwich'in beneficiary with a bachelor of Law degree. She took French Literature and language training in Paris, France. She has undergraduate studies in English literature and political science at Largara College and the University of British Columbia.

She also took a law society professional and legal training course in 2004.

Karen started working for the Gwich'in Tribal Council Self Government in the summer of 2004.

In that time she has worked closely with the four Gwich'in communities.

Rick Bennett—Gwich'in Negotiator

Rick has worked with a variety of Aboriginal Groups in a number of different careers since 1985. He was a Band Manager at two British Columbia Reserves in the 80's and early 1990. In between these two positions,

Rick lived in Inuvik for two years working for the Government of the NWT, Department of Municipal and Community Affairs. That allowed him to travel to most of the local communities.

In 1996, Rick became interested in Aboriginal Law and he went back to University to become a lawyer.

With Rick's new job, he believes his biggest challenge will be working with the other negotiators to arrive at a structure of government in the Beaufort Delta that provides a new sense of balance between the new Gwich'in Government and the territorial and federal governments.

Caroline McGrath—Law Student

Caroline comes from Dublin, Ireland. She received her undergraduate degree from Mercy Hurst College, Erie Pennsylvania where she played basketball. She is currently in her second year of study at Osgoode Hall Law School in Toronto. Her placement in Inuvik is part of an Intensive Program in Aboriginal Lands, Resources and governments that Osgoode runs so that students can get an idea of how the law operates in the 'real world'.

Caroline says that so far she has been given a warm welcome to more than compensate for the chilly working conditions.

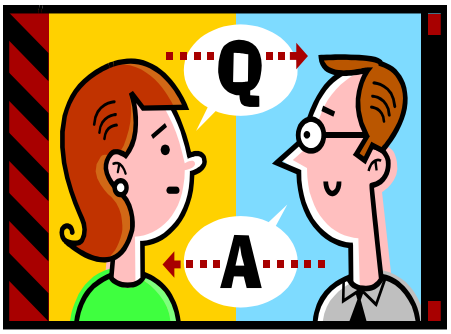
Please give Caroline a warm welcome from the delta.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT SELF GOVERNMENT

Q: What are the benefits of self government—what's in it for you?

There's something for everyone with self government:

- Gwich'in will have their own governments.
- More decisions will be made at a community level, instead of in places like Yellowknife or Ottawa.
- The Gwich'in will have more control over their day to day lives.
- Communities and regions will be stronger as a whole.
- The Gwich'in Government will be able to make laws.
- The Gwich'in Government will be able to tax users of Gwich'in lands.
- The Gwich'in Government will incorporate as much as possible, Gwich'in ideas on government.
- The new government-to-government relationship will mean funds will be used more efficiently, with less overlap in services and will make planning and decision making more effective.



Questions and Answers

Q: ***I work for the GNWT, will I have a job after Self Government comes into effect?***

A: Although there are no guarantees, as the Final Self Government Agreement is signed and transition towards self government begins, people who have experience in government roles will be in great demand.

g: ***Will Gwich'in still get their eyeglasses and dentures under self– government?***

A: Yes, Eyeglasses and dentures are benefits from the Government of Canada. Self Government will not change benefits currently received through the Government of Canada.

- Self Government will be done in two phases. The first phase is the establishment of the Gwich'in government structure. The second phase will address the transfer of government services and programs.

Deep Freeze in Tsiigehtchic

GWICH'IN TRIBAL COUNCIL SELF GOVERNMENT

Box 1509
1-3 Council Crescent

Phone: 867-777-5000
Fax: 867-777-5022
E-mail: mgordon@gwichin.nt.ca

Gwich'in Land, culture & economy for a better future

We're on the web:
www.gwichin.nt.ca

Self Government is the inherent right that aboriginal people are born with and have always had. The Government of Canada refers to this right as the "Inherent right to Self Government". "Inherent" means that it has always been there and always will be.

The Gwich'in and Inuvialuit are negotiating with the Government to have Self Government in the NWT. We will have the right to govern ourselves and to choose programs that will

MARGARET GORDON—SELF GOVERNMENT REGIONAL COORDINATOR

I started working for Self Government for the Gwich'in as the Regional Coordinator in September 2005.

I worked for CBC North Radio for twenty-five years and then took early retirement. During my time with the CBC I had the chance to do all kinds of jobs, from switchboard to management.

I've met all kinds of people and had the chance to hear all their great stories and how it affected them.

I started working for the Gwich'in Tribal Council in 2004. Since then I've had three jobs, receptionist, employment liaison officer and now the Regional Coordinator for Self Government.

As the Coordinator I get a chance to work with the Home Visit staff in the four Gwich'in communities. We've been doing door to door surveys since November and are starting to receive a lot of feedback from beneficiaries.

Beneficiaries are starting to grasp what Self Government can do for them and are asking questions.

The youth that we've hired in the communities are working out real great and we are starting to see results from the communities.

We would like to hear from as many beneficiaries as possible so that when it comes time to vote they will understand and know how to vote.

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