



*The Foundation to our Future is Trust*

---

**SUMMARY REPORT**

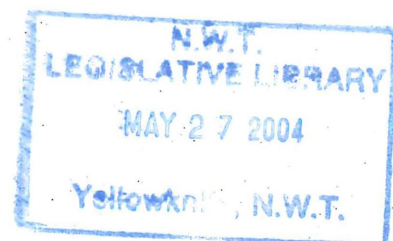
**OF THE**

**CIRCLE OF NORTHERN LEADERS**

---

**Chief Lamalice Complex  
Hay River Dene Reserve  
Northwest Territories**

**April 6 to 8, 2004**



**SUMMARY REPORT  
OF THE  
CIRCLE OF NORTHERN LEADERS**

**Co-Chairs**

**Joanne Barnaby**

**Jim Antoine**

**Facilitators**

**David Hamilton**

**Peter Redvers**

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction.....	1
Day One: Opening Presentations.....	3
Day Two: Discussion of Common Interests.....	6
Day Three: Moving Forward.....	8
Appendix A: List of Participants.....	10
Appendix B: Aboriginal Summit Proposal.....	11

## **Introduction**

At the invitation of the Legislative Assembly Caucus of the Government of the Northwest Territories (GNWT), a gathering of elected northern leaders took place on the Hay River Dene Reserve from April 6 through 8, 2004. The meeting was hosted by the K'atá'odeeche First Nation. Participants included all of the Members of the 15th Legislative Assembly, representatives from Aboriginal governments from all NWT regions, and representatives from the Northwest Territories Association of Communities. A list of participants is attached as Appendix A.

The idea for the Circle of Northern Leaders arose when Members of the recently elected Legislative Assembly gave voice to a general feeling among their respective constituents that all governments within the NWT needed to work together to a greater extent. Northern leaders from Aboriginal and community governments responded to the Caucus' invitation and agreed to attend.



Upon recommendation of the Aboriginal Summit, the Caucus appointed two co-chairs who were independent of government along with two independent facilitators. The chairs and facilitators were given the opportunity to meet in Yellowknife to finalize the agenda for the meeting -- in consultation with the GNWT, community governments, and the Aboriginal Summit -- and establish a structured process for the sharing of information and ideas. This approach ensured that the meeting would not be dominated by any one party and would allow equitable opportunity for all governments to voice their interests, priorities, and concerns. The major goals identified for the Circle of Northern Leaders were to build relationships, identify shared interests and priorities, ensure a deeper understanding of each government's roles and obligations, and establish common ground to work together on issues of territorial concern and importance.

Prior to the gathering, the participating leaders agreed to engage in a public dialogue about the challenges they face and the approaches that might be taken to strengthen cooperative working relationships. Leaders were encouraged to respond to four main questions:

1. What are the three biggest challenges facing your government today in terms of meeting

- the expectations of the people you serve for programs and services?
2. What are the biggest opportunities open to your government in the next five to ten years to improve services to the people you represent?
  3. Are there issues that all Northern Leaders can work on cooperatively to provide better service to the people of the NWT?
  4. What can be done to build trust among northern leaders?

As planned, gathering in a circle -- where everyone is equal -- provided the opportunity for frank, open, respectful, and constructive dialogue to take place. During the meeting, many leaders noted that the gathering was a historic event, a rare opportunity to change history. Following the meeting, the majority of leaders agreed that these types of gatherings should be held on a regular basis, with the intent of addressing substantive territorial issues. One of the most common themes that arose during the meeting was the need to establish a foundation of trust among governments, based on mutual respect and understanding, in order to improve the lives of all territorial residents. As one delegate noted, "the foundation to our future is trust."

This report provides a synopsis of the discussions and results of the meeting, as documented by the co-chairs and facilitators. The co-chairs and facilitators take responsibility for the information presented in this summary report; the report attempts to summarize key discussion items and does not necessarily represent the formal positions of the governments present.

## **Day One: Opening Presentations**

The meeting was opened with a drum song by the K'átá'odeeche drummers.

In her opening comments, co-chair Joanne Barnaby said that she viewed the meeting as providing a rare opportunity to change history -- to change the historic nature of the relationships between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal governments. In his opening comments, co-



chair Jim Antoine stated that he viewed the gathering as an opportunity to talk about how governments can help each other. He noted that a meeting like this had not happened before and that northern leaders had gathered in one place to plan for the future. Kevin Menicoche, Caucus Chair, set the stage for the gathering by asking the leaders to think how strong all governments would be if they could form an unbroken circle to address issues of common concern. Mr. Menicoche noted that there are many areas that northern governments have in common and can work together on.

Following the opening remarks by the co-chairs and Caucus chair, representatives from each of the regional Aboriginal governments, the Dene Nation, the Legislative Assembly, and the Association of Communities had the opportunity to make presentations in response to the four questions raised by meeting organizers.

Chiefs Peter Liske and Archie Catholique of the Akaitcho Territory Government spoke of the need to:

- Implement Aboriginal and Treaty rights based on the concept of co-existence
- Protect the land and culture from the impacts of resource development
- Improve the quality of life for Akaitcho residents and the territories as a whole
- Create meaningful employment and business opportunities for communities
- Build trust among governments
- Strengthen community governance capacity.

They identified the resolution of the First Nation / non-Aboriginal relationship as a key priority for their region. Chief Robert Sayine of Fort Resolution, speaking later in the gathering, spoke strongly of the need to generate employment within his community. He stated that families were suffering without meaningful work and a regular paycheque.

Chiefs Roy Fabian and Kenya Norwegian of the Deh Cho First Nations spoke of the need to:

- Implement inherent Aboriginal and Treaty rights under the concept of shared stewardship

- Preserve the land, language, and culture based on the direction of the elders
- Educate youth regarding Dene laws, values, beliefs, and practices
- Promote and support personal and community well-being
- Change the non-Aboriginal way of thinking to accommodate Dene values and beliefs.

They stressed the need to resolve the Deh Cho Process prior to devolution of federal authorities to the NWT.

Noeline Villebrun spoke on behalf of the Dene Nation. She emphasized the need to:

- Increase First Nation legitimacy, authority, and resources
- Preserve Aboriginal languages and culture and protect the land and environment
- Work together for the youth, utilizing existing studies and reports
- Identify shared concerns such as gun control, environmental issues, and residential school
- Increase the resources and capacity at the community level to respond to development
- Negotiate a fair devolution of funding and authority to the territorial and regional levels of government.

Premier Joe Handley of the Legislative Assembly spoke of the need to:

- Find a balance between resource development and environmental stewardship
- Promote healthy lifestyles based on personal responsibility and prevention
- Work together to take advantage of the wide range of opportunities available to northerners
- Build trust through an ongoing process of dialogue
- Move more quickly on devolution so that all governments can have the fiscal resources required to deliver quality programs and services
- Build capacity at all levels to take advantage of current opportunities.

Premier Handley stressed the need to build governance capacity at all levels of government in response to devolution and self-government processes.

Charlie Furlong of the Gwich'in Tribal Council addressed the need to:

- Establish self-sufficiency through economic development and devolution of authority and resources to First Nation governments
- Take full advantage of current and future resource development opportunities
- Clarify the role of the Aboriginal Summit
- Ensure that devolution and resource sharing issues are resolved prior to pipeline and other major resource development activities
- Build overall capacity among youth.

Eddie Dillon of the Inuvialuit Regional Corporation spoke of the need to:

- Focus on education and social well-being, with a focus of family
- Ensure sustainable development that balances non-renewable resource development with the traditional economy
- Access more financial resources at the regional level to develop and deliver required programs and services
- Build small business and local governance capacity.

Mr. Dillon stressed the need to negotiate stronger and more flexible revenue sharing agreements between the GNWT and the IRC.

North Douglas and Thelma Chalifoux of the North Slave Métis Alliance spoke of the need to:

- Establish a table for the negotiation of North Slave Métis rights
- Carry out thorough environmental assessments to ensure protection of the land
- Promote social well-being with a focus on children and youth
- Continue to participate fully in northern mining development
- Work together as one people
- Access adequate resources to address land and economic issues.

Ms. Chalifoux stressed the importance of understanding Métis history and culture in the north and moving forward on rights negotiations.

Blake Lyons of NWT Association of Communities identified the need to:

- Promote community health and well-being
- Take advantage of resource development opportunities
- Work together to build trust and address common issues
- Increase resources at the community level to do the work required.

The Association is particularly concerned about strengthening human resource capacity to address governance challenges, and developing and maintaining infrastructure at the community and regional levels.



Robert Tordiff of the North West Territory Métis Nation spoke of the need to:

- Accept that there may be differing governance models among regions
  - Complete negotiation of a land, resources, and governance agreement as the foundation for a Métis government
  - Assess and identify realistic social and cultural goals in the face of immense change
  - Pursue and manage economic development initiatives to generate revenue
- Build trust on an understanding and respect for our shared histories
  - Measure results to determine effective use of our current territorial funding
  - Provide more support and attention to smaller communities.

Mr. Tordiff noted that devolution may provide authority but may not provide the resources required to implement the programs and services required.



Chiefs Frank Andrew and Raymond Tutcho from the Sahtu noted that they were still working on implementing their land claim agreement and negotiating self-government agreements. They stressed the need to:

- Preserve the traditional values and beliefs of the elders
- Protect the land, language, and culture
- Address alcohol and other social issues in order to make a good future for the children and youth
- Participate in these types of gatherings to prepare for the future
- Access more funding at the regional and community levels to do the work that is required.

The chiefs stated that protecting the land is a key priority in the Sahtu and that long range planning and capacity building is required to face current challenges.

James Wah-shee, speaking on behalf of the Tâicho, identified the three main priorities for his region:

- Concluding the Tâicho land claim and self-government agreement
- Protecting the land and wildlife from resource development
- Preserving the Tâicho culture and language.

He also noted that:

- Social problems must be addressed through working together
- Conditions must be put in place to ensure full benefit from resource development
- We are all here to stay in the north and must learn to work together in a non-adversarial manner
- Fiscal issues can be resolved through working together – devolution is only one component of the fiscal picture
- Land claim and self-government negotiations and agreements in all regions must be supported
- Human and governance capacity at the regional and community levels needs strengthened.

At the end of the day, the co-chairs provided a brief summary of the presentations and thanked all of the presenters.

### **Day Two: Discussion of Common Interests**

In preparation for Day Two, the co-chairs and facilitators prepared a short synopsis of the key challenges, opportunities, and issues identified during the Day One presentations. Follow-up questions, based on the original four questions, were also developed and circulated among the leaders to help focus further discussions.

Day Two began with a prayer and opening comments by the co-chairs. The remainder of the day consisted of an open plenary discussion, with the co-chairs ensuring that each participating

government had the opportunity to share their views.

By the end of the second day of open and frank discussions, the public and Aboriginal governments of the Northwest Territories had identified issues of common interest and concern and begun to discuss a process for stronger inter-governmental



collaboration. The overriding goal of this collaboration is to strengthen the social, cultural, and economic well-being of all of our residents. There was a clear consensus to continue a process of communication and dialogue to address a wide range of northern issues.

It became clear that the biggest challenges facing all our governments are:

- Lack of authority and / or resources to initiate programs and services to meet community, regional, and territorial needs
- Lack of resources to effectively implement land claims and governance agreements
- Need to improve wellness and quality of life
- Need to deal with cultural and social change.

The most significant opportunities governments share include:

- Resolution of inherent Aboriginal and Treaty rights through negotiation of land claims, self-government, and /or entitlement agreements
- Financing agreements that provide adequate and flexible financing to implement programs and services and build human and physical capacity
- Sustainable resource development activities that lead to a greater degree of regional self-sufficiency.

Some key issues of common concern are:

- Promotion of health and wellness – building on studies and processes that have already been initiated, such as the Social Agenda
- Preservation and development of Aboriginal language and culture
- Ensuring an effective balance between protection of the land and resource development
- Building greater capacity at the community and regional level, particularly with respect to education, training, governance, and infrastructure.

It also became clear that in order to address these issues, northern governments must build trust and develop new ways to work together. Leaders identified a number of possible areas for working together, including:

- Working together to negotiate a more equitable financing arrangement between the public and Aboriginal governments, beginning with existing funding. This process might build the trust required, and the capacity, to jointly negotiate greater powers and resources from the federal government;
- Working together to support the settling of outstanding inherent Aboriginal rights and land claims processes in order to achieve equity and certainty among all governments;
- Working together to identify and establish methods to ensure that all communities have the opportunity to participate in and benefit from economic development activities;
- Working together to determine the extent and pace of resource development to ensure the maximum benefit to current and future generations;
- Working together to establish a more effective forum to address resource development activities and issues -- particularly in 'unsettled' areas -- while fully recognizing and respecting inherent Aboriginal and Treaty rights and processes;
- Working together to utilize our existing Aboriginal governments to address capacity building and social issues, rather than creating new agencies, which can impede direct flow-through to regions and communities; and
- Working together to ensure respect for policies established by Aboriginal governments to meet their specific social, cultural, and economic needs.

Significantly, there was general agreement that all governments need to establish more effective means to address common interests and needs by establishing a forum for further inter-governmental dialogue. Discussion of specific approaches that might be taken to establish a forum was carried over to Day Three of the gathering.

### **Day Three: Moving Forward**

On Day Three, which consisted of a morning session, each of the participating governments was invited to make final comments on the proceedings and offer suggestions for moving forward.

A number of leaders noted that gathering in the circle and listening respectfully to each other promoted greater understanding of each other's concerns and responsibilities and more respect for the positions that respective governments take on certain issues. Others commented on the wide range of issues identified that were of common concern and could be addressed collaboratively.

Some leaders noted that this gathering demonstrated that governments can work together while still retaining their independence. The need to work together is paramount but, at the same time, each government has specific mandates that they have to carry out.

Many leaders identified the need for a collective northern vision and an agenda for action. Speaking with one voice would have greater impact in negotiations with Canada and with industry. Although it was acknowledged that there are still obstacles to overcome, it was hoped that the development of a Northern vision could be built on mutual trust. All of the leaders made a commitment to working together to further the aims of the Circle of Leaders and work toward the well-being of all northern residents.

The northern leaders generally agreed that a more formalized and regular inter-governmental gathering of elected northern leaders needs to occur. To this end, it was agreed that representatives from the Aboriginal governments, Government of the NWT, and community governments would meet to discuss common issues and to formalize a process to continue the spirit and intent of working together on a common vision for the future.

The Aboriginal Summit offered the gathering a proposal they called "A New Approach for a Partnership between Aboriginal Governments and the Government of the Northwest Territories." The proposal is attached as Appendix B. The Aboriginal Summit stated that the proposal was a preliminary step toward formalizing the spirit of working together that had been evident during the gathering of Northern governments. The Aboriginal Summit further clarified that this proposal was for preliminary discussion purposes with the Government of the Northwest Territories and community governments.

This historic gathering of northern governments and leaders ended with consensus that a foundation had been laid for a new way of working together to improve the lives of people in all communities and regions. A foundation was laid for co-existence built on respect for each other's diversity, inherent rights and responsibilities, mutual trust, and desire to strengthen northern governance.



## **Appendix A: Participating Northern Leaders**

### **Akaiicho Territory Government**

Chief Archie Catholique  
Chief Peter Liske  
Chief Darrell Beaulieu  
Chief Robert Sayine

### **Deh Cho First Nations**

Chief Lloyd Chicot  
Chief Roy Fabien  
Chief Keyna Norwegian  
Elder Leo Norwegian  
Chief Peter Marcellais

### **Dene Nation**

National Grand Chief Noeline Villebrun

### **Legislative Assembly Government of the Northwest Territories**

Speaker Hon. David Krutko  
Premier Hon. Joe Handley  
Minister Hon. Brendan Bell  
Minister Hon. Charles Dent  
Minister Hon. Michael McLeod  
Minister Hon. J. Michael Miltenberger  
Minister Hon. Floyd Roland  
Minister Hon. Henry Zoe  
MLA Bill Braden  
MLA Paul Delorey  
MLA Jane Groenewegen  
MLA Robert Hawkins  
MLA Sandy Lee  
MLA Kevin Menicoche  
MLA Calvin Pokiak  
MLA David Ramsay  
MLA Bobby Villeneuve  
MLA Norman Yakeleya

### **Inuvialuit Regional Corporation**

Eddie Dillon

### **North Slave Métis Alliance**

President North G. Douglas  
Fred Turner  
Thelma Chalifoux  
Jack R. Williams

### **NWT Association of Communities**

President Blake Lyons  
Deputy Mayor Clarence Wood  
Mayor Gary Bristow  
Councillor Joesph Francis  
Mayor Winnie Cadieux  
Councillor Mark Collier  
Mayor Raymond Michaud

### **Northwest Territory Metis Nation**

President Robert Tordiff  
Ken Hudson  
Cecil Lafferty

### **Sahtu Secretariat Inc./Sahtu Dene Council**

Chief Frank Andrew  
Raymond Tutcho

### **Tlicho Treaty 11 Tribal Council**

Grand Chief Joe Rabesca  
Chief Charlie Nitsiza  
Chief Joseph Judas  
James Wah-shee

### **Interpreters**

Ann Biscaye  
Douglas Dillon  
Celine Football  
Sarah Gargan  
Dora Grandejambe  
Leona Poitras  
Alex Tambour  
Mary Rose Sundberg

## **Appendix B: Aboriginal Summit Proposal**

### **A NEW APPROACH FOR A PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN ABORIGINAL GOVERNMENTS AND GNWT**

#### **NWT INTERGOVERNMENTAL ASSEMBLY**

##### **1. Mandate**

Aboriginal governments propose the establishment of a formalized intergovernmental partnership comprised of leaders of Regional Aboriginal governments and the GNWT / Legislative Assembly to be known as the NWT Intergovernmental Assembly (the "IGA").

The purpose of the IGA is to facilitate key agenda items related to the development of:

- strategies that advance an NWT agenda that respects the interests of Aboriginal peoples, First Nations, Aboriginal governments and the GNWT;
- agreements that support Aboriginal peoples and Aboriginal governments in achieving capacity to participate;
- intergovernmental agreements that clarify and define relationships;
- strategies that identify economic opportunities and support participation;
- agreements and legislation required for the support and implementation of devolution; and
- joint planning and priorities.

##### **2. Structure**

The IGA would be a bilateral institution comprised of leaders of the Aboriginal governments and the GNWT / Legislative Assembly. The IGA would convene on a quarterly basis or as requested by the Aboriginal governments or the GNWT. The IGA will conduct its business on the principle of building consensus.

The Aboriginal Summit Secretariat and the GNWT would provide technical support to the participants in the IGA.

##### **3. Outcomes**

The Aboriginal governments and the GNWT will commit to implement the decisions of the IGA.