

DEHCHO NEWS

NEGOTIATIONS IN SAMBAA K'E



Our Fieldworkers

In this issue we are introducing our team of Negotiations Fieldworkers. They have visited several communities to date and will be visiting the rest within the next month.

Trouble at Lindberg Landing

The Dehcho Grand Chief will be meeting a second time with territorial Premier R. J. Simpson to protest the alienation of Dehcho lands.

THE NEGOTIATORS

The Dehcho Negotiations Team met with their federal and territorial counterparts in Sambaa K'e for the October session of the Dehcho Process Main Table Negotiations. See the summary reports of the recent Dehcho Process Negotiating Sessions inside.

Left to right in the photo:

Gavin Cazon-Wilkes (DFN), Ramona Pearson (DFN), Mike Nadli (DFN), Shannon Lyman (GNWT), Chris Reid (DFN), Georges Erasmus (DFN), Herb Norwegian (DFN), Walter Brown (DFN), Manuela Haemmerli (Canada), Hannah Neudorf (GNWT), Eric Leonard (Canada)

Dehcho Process Negotiations, October 27-30, Sambaa K'e

Dehcho Process negotiations continued with the federal and territorial government representatives in Sambaa K'e over the course of four days from October 27 to the 30th. Negotiators maintained a steady pace and a great deal of work was accomplished including the finalizing of two agreements. The two agreements signed were the Dehcho Process Communications Protocol and the Dehcho Process Work Plan. Five chapters dealing with social issues have been generally agreed to and are nearing completion;

- Social housing
- Income Assistance
- Marriage
- Wills and Estates
- Guardianship and Trusteeship

Lands, jurisdiction, and access to lands continued to be the subject of intense discussion. The DFN continues to insist on the right to maintain jurisdiction over access to Dehcho lands. Initial discussions were also held on Land Use Planning (Chapter 36), Taxation (Chapter 27) and Fiscal Arrangements. These are the most difficult and contentious issues and will be under discussion beyond the time of the signing of the AIP.

In the interests of completing the AIP by next June it was agreed to defer or 'punt' these issues forward to be finalized when the final Dehcho Treaty is signed. During negotiations different chapters of the AIP are reviewed and amended and when finalized, they give shape

to the AIP. The easier straightforward chapters are dealt with first and the more difficult ones are reserved for future negotiations. A significant deferral concerns the relationship of the Dehcho Resource Management Act to the current Mackenzie Valley Resource Management Act.

The most contentious overall issue is the presence of the GNWT in what is rightfully a bi-lateral process between the DFN and the federal government. The GNWT continues to insist they constitute a legitimate government and consequently must continue to have overall jurisdiction in the Dehcho. DFN negotiators made it clear that the GNWT is just a recent incarnation of an old colonial model and it should have no permanency. The DFN continues to maintain that nothing in the final Dehcho Treaty should empower the GNWT.

Discussion advanced on other sections of the AIP including:

- Jurisdiction on Dehcho Ndehe
- Heritage Resources
- Implementation
- Approving the AIP
- Eligibility and Enrolment
- Transition
- Definitions

Like most sessions, the Sambaa K'e meeting was a hybrid session conducted in person and virtually on line. The next negotiating session will be held in Ottawa, November 24-27. was a hybrid session conducted in person and virtually on ine. The next negotiating session will be held in Ottawa, November 24-27.

Meet the Dehcho First Nations Fieldworker Team



Annadette Bouvier

Annadette is from Fort Providence. Her late parents are Ann and Gilbert Bouvier (Sr). Annadette attended Aurora College in Yellowknife and graduated in 2020 with a diploma in ECE. She then moved back home to Fort Providence where she worked for a time at the local school. She decided to further her education and attended Vancouver Island University in Nanaimo where she graduated with a major in Indigenous Studies. Following graduation Annadette made the meaningful decision to move back home to Fort Providence driven by a strong desire to give back and contribute to the growth and well-being of her community. Today she continues to focus on making a positive impact through service, leadership, and collaboration with her Nation. Annadette is currently working with the Dehcho First Nations and is a valued member of the Negotiations Team.



Sheldon Minoza

Sheldon was born in Hay River and has lived his whole life in Deh Gah Got'ie. He has maintained strong ties to his culture and takes pride in being a Dene man. He loves his culture and loves being out on our land camping and hunting with his family. For the past four years Sheldon has played an active role in the leadership of his community. He has been a strong advocate for the youth throughout his years of service, especially when it comes to cultural Dene Game rights (hand games etc.) He earned his high school diploma but because of a family crisis he never got the chance to finish his post-secondary school education. Sheldon hopes to see the Dehcho region finally come to an agreement with the Governments of the Northwest Territories and Canada. He feels it is very important that the Dehcho finally gets its own government so that we take care of our own people properly.

Joseph Horesay



Joseph was born and raised in and around the community of Liidlii Kue (Ft. Simpson). He is a biological descendent of the Norwegian Clan of Rabbitskin River area. As a child he was traditionally adopted to the Horesay family. He was educated in different NWT schools including residential school. Joseph eventually went on to attend Arctic College in Inuvik where he completed the diploma program C.A.P in the late 1980s. In his early years he worked in journalism, radio and newspapers. Later he changed his career plan and worked in construction until coming on board with the DFN. He is now working with the DFN Negotiations Team as a fieldworker communicating information about the Dehcho Process to the communities. Joseph is fluent in his language and says this work will enable him to reconnect with the youth and elders. He is looking forward to meeting and greeting the Dene throughout the Dehcho Region.

Rosa Wright



Rosa was born in the Mackenzie Delta and moved to Liidlii Kue in 1976. She has stayed in the community ever since to raise her children and watch her grandchildren grow, only leaving temporarily for educational purposes. She has been involved in the Dehcho Process since the original Dene/Metis Claim and with the Dehcho Process since 1988, firstly, with the Metis Local “52” and then with LKFN after Bill C-31 was passed and she was able to reclaim her Dene identity. Rosa feels honoured to have been asked to be involved because, as she says, “Dehcho is My Heart”. She has visited and listened to the elders of the Dehcho for over 30 years and understands what the Dehcho Process means to them and what the Elders are trying to achieve in their efforts to maintain their treaty rights. Rosa grew up with the teachings of the elders and she follows Dehcho Dene customs that are intrinsically and intricately ingrained into her way of life. She is fully committed to ensuring that she do the best she can to help the Dehcho Dene people.

Field Work Update

The Dehcho First Nations are happy to welcome Annadette Bouvier, Sheldon Minoza, Joseph Horesay and Rosa Wright who were hired in September as the DFN Fieldworker Team. Fieldworkers perform a vital service to the overall negotiation of the Dehcho Treaty. Their job is to update and inform Dehcho First Nation Members living in all Dehcho communities, excluding of course, Katl'odeeche First Nation Reserve and Acho Dene Koe.

The Dehcho Process Negotiations Work Plan 2025-2026 calls for the completion of an Agreement-in-Principle by summer 2026. It's a tight schedule and consequently, fieldworkers are busy presenting priority messaging and information focused on:

- Current Status of the AIP
- Lands and Resources Mandate
- 2018 Joint Offer
- Negotiations Chronology
- Dehcho Government
- Enumeration/Eligibility
- Dehcho Constitution

Introductions to the DFN Negotiating Team and orientation for fieldworkers were held at the end of September and again in October in Fort Simpson. Roles and responsibilities were highlighted and key areas for presentation and messaging were discussed. Fieldworkers also attended the Leadership Meeting in Fort Providence.

The Fieldworkers are constantly reviewing information and documents related to the Dehcho Process Negotiations to be as effective as possible in communicating that information to Dehcho communities. To date, the fieldworkers have conducted community information meetings and household visits in the following communities:

- Sambaa K'eh October 7-10
- Fort Providence/Deh Gah Got'ie Dene First Nation and Metis Nation, November 3-5
- West Point First Nation, November 6, 7 (continuing)

The Fieldworkers are currently visiting or will soon visit the communities of:

- Ka'a'gee Tu/ Kakisa
- Jean Marie River
- Fort Simpson-LKFN and Metis Local
- Na?ahdehe/ Nahanni Butte
- Pehdzeh Ki/Wrigley

Discussions with these communities are ongoing to confirm schedules for upcoming visits. All Dehcho communities will be visited and the fieldworkers will continue to carry out their duties and responsibilities up to March 31 of 2026. Fieldworker reports outlining community concerns are being compiled and a detailed summary will be made available to the membership. Lands, resources, jurisdiction, enumeration and elections are primary concerns to all.

Violence and Vandalism at Lindberg Landing

The Leadership of the Dehcho First Nations held an emergency meeting September 26 to decide what actions to take to address a violent and dangerous situation that has developed at Lindberg Landing located on the Liard Highway in the Dehcho Territory. Grand Chief Herb Norwegian called into question the actions, or inaction of both the RCMP and the GNWT regarding the situation.

Earlier that week heavy equipment belonging to Nogah Enterprises of Fort Simpson, a Dehcho First Nations company carrying out work at the Lindberg Landing site was severely vandalized on at least two occasions. Damages are estimated to be in excess of \$100,000.

Norwegian believes that unidentified squatters living illegally on the property had blocked Dehcho citizens' access to the site by erecting a locked gate. Nogah was on site to remove the gate pursuant to a court order when the vandalism took place.

Norwegian pointed out that the RCMP did attend the site but they left soon after and announced that they would not be investigating. They effectively announced that racist attacks and vandalism aimed at Dene in their homeland will not be investigated or prosecuted.

Norwegian also pointed a finger at the GNWT for failing to uphold its own laws and legal agreements signed with the Dehcho First Nations. He says their failure to honour existing agreements such as the Interim Measures Agreement and their failure to act on historical

grievances has fostered the current situation and emboldened people to break the law.

He says this abdication of legal responsibility by both the national police force and the territorial government to protect the interests and safety of Dehcho citizens is "racism, pure and simple".

Dehcho Leadership Meet with Premier Simpson

Dehcho leaders met with the territorial Premier R.J. Simpson November 6 in Yellowknife to follow up on concerns regarding illegal activity on Dehcho lands, including at Lindberg Landing. Dehcho First Nations Grand Chief Herb Norwegian told the Premier, "Our worst fears are coming true – that while we negotiate, Dehcho lands are being taken from under our feet in violation of the Interim Measures Agreement we signed with the GNWT and Canada in 2001." He pointed out that the DFN had felt reassured that the GNWT would act swiftly to end sales and leases of lands when the Premier had stated earlier, "We signed the IMA. We'll follow the IMA".

The Grand Chief stressed the need to rebuild the trust and good faith that was committed to when the Interim Measures Agreement was signed. He asked the Premier to reaffirm the commitment made in the IMA that Dehcho lands will not be taken, sold or leased against the wishes of the DFN while the Dehcho Treaty is being negotiated. The final objective is a Treaty which will recognize a Dehcho Government as the primary government for all residents of the Dehcho. A follow-up meeting is planned for early December.

Dehcho Process Negotiations Continue in Ottawa

A marathon session has been planned for the next Dehcho Process Negotiations session being held in Ottawa November 24-27. The Negotiations team will be joined in Ottawa by Dehcho Grand Chief Herb Norwegian, Chief Kele Antoine of Ft. Simpson, Chief Melaine Norwegian of Jean Marie River, Chief Loyd Chicot of Ka'a'gee, Chief Jamie Moses of Pehdze Ki and Albert Lafferty of the Ft. Providence Metis Local.

A large part of the session will be sharing information on different issues and proposed chapters of the AIP including:

- Ownership of Water
(Dehcho Jurisdiction)
- Migratory Birds Chapter
- Fish Chapter
- Parks Chapter
- Protected Areas Chapter
- Economic Measures/Economic Development
- Dehcho Regional Government
(Exclusive jurisdiction)

Consideration of Child & Family Services will be a central issue with discussions focusing on the CFS/Adoption Chapter and related chapters of the AIP and with a presentation by Indigenous Services Canada on their position.

The federal government will also be making a presentation on its fiscal and taxation proposals which will be subject to an all-party review.

The review of chapters in the AIP will continue throughout the three days of meetings. Additional chapters up for discussion are:

- Language and Culture Chapter
- Land Use Planning
- Ratification Chapter
- Access Chapter: remainder of chapter
- Dehcho Resource Management Act
- Eligibility and Enrolment
- Jurisdiction on Dehcho Ndehe
- Marriage

A detailed summary of the chapters and proposals under discussion will be made available following the session. The next Dehcho Process Negotiations after Ottawa will take place in the New Year, January 26-29, and will be held online.



Veteran Dehcho Leader Gabe Hardisty

Leadership Meeting Fort Providence, October 14-15

Dehcho First Nations leaders gathered for a very important meeting in Fort Providence. They were there to give their support to the negotiations team to move ahead with critical issues at the negotiating table. All Dehcho communities were represented with the exception of Kakisa, Nahanni Butte and, of course, Acho Dene Koe (ADK) who had previously withdrawn from the DFN.

At the 2025 Annual General Assembly in June the Leadership directed the negotiations team to speed up negotiations, hopefully to complete an Agreement in Principle (AIP) by next June. Negotiators were subsequently looking for specific direction from the Leadership on key issues. Land quantum and provisions for access by persons who are not Dehcho Citizens to Dehcho lands were two key issues.

The DFN did not make any decision regarding the 2018 joint offer from the federal and territorial governments. Negotiators summarized the key features of the offer which includes a land quantum of up to 48,000 sq km of surface and subsurface lands. This quantum would be in addition to Community Lands which will be owned by Dehcho Community Governments and in addition to protected areas including Edhezhie and Nahanni Park.

Land use planning will continue throughout the whole Dehcho territory after a final land agreement is reached. The Dehcho Agreement will also establish a Dehcho Resource Management Authority (DCRMA) which would

have responsibility for issuing land use permits throughout the whole Dehcho territory. Treaty harvesting rights would continue throughout the whole traditional territory of the Dehcho and there will be no extinguishment of any rights through the Dehcho Agreement. All critical decisions concerning land and land use will be made by affected communities.

Leaders did not make a final decision but they feel the 2018 offer is a good one, at least as far as the land quantum is concerned, and they agreed that negotiations toward an AIP should proceed on that basis. Negotiators pointed out that the total amount of all reserve land in Canada is only 38,000 sq km, much less than what the 2018 joint offer would provide for Dehcho First Nations alone. In Alberta, reserve lands account for a total of only 7,700 sq km.

Related issues concerning access to Dehcho lands by non-Dene, wildlife management and fire management were discussed. Resolutions were passed making clear the positions communities wanted the negotiating team to take at the next negotiating session in Sambaa K'e in October. They are as follows:

- The Dehcho AIP and the final Dehcho Treaty will recognize that the Dehcho Government has primary jurisdiction to legislate in relation to access to Dehcho lands by non-Citizens.
- The Dehcho AIP and the final Dehcho Treaty will recognize that the Dehcho Government has primary jurisdiction to legislate in relation to the management and harvest of wildlife on Dehcho lands.

- The Dehcho AIP and the Dehcho Treaty will recognize that the Dehcho Government has jurisdiction to legislate in relation to forest fires on Dehcho lands.

A resolution regarding the deferral or ‘punting’ of certain matters was also passed. In the interests of moving quickly toward signing an AIP some issues will be deferred or ‘punted’ ahead to be negotiated during the final phase of the Dehcho Process. These issues include the role of the Dehcho Government and the Dehcho Resource Management Act (DCRMA) in managing Dehcho territory resources. Negotiators stressed that whatever is agreed to in the AIP will be “without prejudice”, meaning it will not be legally binding.

Extreme wildfires in the past couple of years have exposed critical weaknesses within the current system of government that need to be fixed ASAP. The delay in recognizing Dehcho Government authority is costing Dehcho communities. With that in mind, the DFN leadership committed itself to meet again in January or as soon as possible in 2026, to discuss and give further direction to the negotiating team. In order to facilitate this work, a resolution was passed to establish a Leadership Committee capable of giving real time advice to the negotiations team as needed.

Some common concerns were discussed. Several leaders raised the issue of Dehcho unity noting that it seems to be deteriorating over time as some communities leave or threaten to leave, thereby weakening the organization. Leaders also pointed to a very significant problem that is getting worse over time - the problem of capacity. Communities

don’t have enough resources to stay on top of all the issues confronting them.

The issuing of new leases and new sales of Commissioner’s Lands continues to be a problem for DFN communities. They stressed the need for the GNWT to honour the 2001 Interim Measures Agreement (IMA) by not alienating any Commissioner’s lands in the Dehcho without the approval of the affected communities and a resolution was passed to that effect.

Many of us have been through the mill - 10, 12, 15 years at residential school. We were removed from our communities and the land and that always plays a part in everything that goes on.

The elders knew every inch of Dene Ndehe – names, descriptions, sacred places – places we never visited. The best land protection we have, that has ever been, is just simply being out on the land.

We have no choice but to get back out on the land. We need to renew our relationship to the land.

Joachim Bonnetreouge

Deh Gha Got’ie

DFN Welcomes Home Town Lawyer



Gavin Cazon-Wilkes

Gavin is a member of Liidlii Kue First Nation and the great-grandson of the late Chief Baptiste Cazon. He graduated from the University of Alberta Faculty of Law with his Juris Doctor in 2023 and recently received the King Charles III Coronation Medal in recognition of his commitment to justice in the NWT. Gavin spent two years working for the Wahkohtowin Law and Governance Lodge in Edmonton before returning to Fort Simpson to work with the Dehcho First Nations as In-House Legal Counsel. Gavin's work with DFN includes Dehcho negotiations in lands, resources and self-governance, memos and opinion letters, legal drafting, Aboriginal law, Indigenous law, constitutional law, and legal research. He is a welcome addition to the DFN team.

Looking ahead...

Fieldworkers are currently visiting or will soon visit the communities of Ka'a'gee Tu/Kakisa, Jean Marie River, Fort Simpson/LKFN and Metis, Na?ahdehe/ Nahanni Butte and Pehdzeh Ki/Wrigley. Discussions with those communities are ongoing and the schedules for upcoming visits will be finalized soon.

Dehcho Process Negotiations will take place November 24-27 in Ottawa. The Grand Chief and several community Chiefs will travel to the capital with the Negotiations Team

The Ottawa session will be followed by a Special DFN Leadership Meeting to be scheduled for early January to assess progress and give renewed direction to the Negotiations Team

The first Dehcho Process Negotiations in the New Year will take place January 26-29 online.



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