

## **Joint News Release: NWT Council of Leaders working together to implement the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples**

**Yellowknife, NT (March 29, 2023)** – The Government of the Northwest Territories (GNWT), Indigenous governments, and Indigenous organizations of the Northwest Territories have worked together to reach two key milestones in the GNWT’s 2019-2023 Mandate commitment to adopt *the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* (UN Declaration).

In its inaugural meeting, the NWT Council of Leaders (NWTCOL) tasked a working group of officials from the GNWT, Indigenous governments, and Indigenous organizations with proposing an approach for how to move implementation of the UN Declaration forward. The recommendations included the development of legislation and concluding a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU).

On March 29, 2023, the GNWT introduced in the Legislative Assembly the proposed *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Implementation Act*. This *Act* aims to formalize the mechanisms that the GNWT will use to ensure that future laws, regulations, and policies are consistent with human rights as outlined in the Declaration. The *Act* was developed in partnership with Indigenous governments and Indigenous organizations through the working group of officials.

The NWTCOL have also agreed to a new MOU intended to govern the relationship necessary for the continued collaborative approach that will implement the UN Declaration in the Northwest Territories. The MOU commits the GNWT to working in collaboration and cooperation with Indigenous governments and Indigenous organizations to prepare and implement an action plan for achieving the objectives of the UN Declaration.

### **Quotes**

“This UNDRIP Law will see Dól̨nę Got’ınę Government working with Indigenous governments and the GNWT to ensure GNWT laws and policies respect our self-determination, including land and self government agreement rights and authorities. The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples will take many years to implement. Making a commitment to working together on implementing UNDRIP in the NWT is an important step toward improving the lives of Dól̨nę Citizens.”

**-Danny Gaudet, ʔekw’ahtı́dó, Dól̨nę Got’ınę Government**

“This MOU is a critical first step in the development of this fundamental human rights legislation in the Northwest Territories. Given that Indigenous peoples compose a significant number of the residents of the Northwest Territories, it is essential that we lead the way in terms of properly implementing the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. It is important to ensure that this potential legislation leads to a substantial improvement in the experience that many of our Indigenous people have in

accessing programming and services with the Territorial Government in the coming years and decades.

“This MOU establishes a framework towards achieving this and the Gwich’in Tribal Council looks forward to participating with other Indigenous Nations and the GNWT in the continued development of this important milestone in the history of this territory.”

**-Grand Chief Ken Kyikavichuk, Gwich’in Tribal Council**

“This Memorandum of Understanding and this new legislation will be an important part of an evolving framework that ensures all Indigenous governments and the Government of the Northwest Territories will work in close cooperation on new legislation to implement UNDRIP. This MOU and legislation, as another important step forward in reconciliation for all the Indigenous Peoples and the Government of the NWT, is supported by the NSMA so that no one is left behind, ever again.”

**-Marc Whitford, Vice-President, North Slave Metis Alliance**

“The Inuvialuit Regional Corporation (IRC) believes the UN Declaration must be implemented in the NWT and looks forward to the Legislative Assembly passing this Bill. While not a signatory to the MOU, IRC will guide the GNWT in this important work alongside other Indigenous governments in the NWT, and will monitor the GNWT as it takes steps towards implementation.”

**-Duane Ningaqsiq Smith, Chair and Chief Executive Officer, Inuvialuit Regional Corporation**

“We look forward to collaborating with GNWT and the Indigenous Governments to implementing UNDRIP in the NWT as set out in the MOU and Implementation Act. The MOU and Implementation Act sets the stage to achieve reconciliation through the transformation of NWT law to implement the principles of UNDRIP. The MOU and Implementation Act provides the framework to ensure the human rights of Indigenous people are respected and honoured.”

**-Garry Bailey, President, Northwest Territory Métis Nation**

“The Government of the Northwest Territories committed to advancing the implementation of the UN Declaration in the Northwest Territories – and together, in partnership with Indigenous governments across the territory, we are one step closer to this historic achievement. Through formalizing the MOU, and with the introduction of this new legislation to further implement the UN Declaration, we are building an NWT where the human rights of Indigenous Peoples are respected, celebrated, and included in every aspect of society. The GNWT is committed to working in partnership with Indigenous governments to implement the UN Declaration based on the principles of justice, democracy, and respect for human rights.”

**- Caroline Cochrane, Premier of the Northwest Territories**

“On behalf of Tłı̨chǫ Government, I am happy to provide Tłı̨chǫ Government’s support for this MOU. UNDRIP contains important principles which should be supported and implemented by GNWT across its government, to the benefit of all Indigenous peoples of the Northwest Territories. Tłı̨chǫ Government looks forward to collaborating with the GNWT and all the Indigenous governments and organizations of the Northwest Territories

to support the implementation of the of the UN Declaration in the Northwest Territories, while respecting the NWT treaty-making and implementation processes.”

**-Grand Chief Jackson Lafferty, *Tłıchǫ Government***

### **Quick facts**

- The rights set out in the UN Declaration are a universal framework of minimum standards for Indigenous Peoples’ survival, dignity, and well-being.
- The NWT Council of Leaders allows governments to share ideas, share capacity, avoid duplication, and discuss common priorities and interests including social and economic issues, and the UN Declaration.
- Article 38 of the UN Declaration directs governments to work in cooperation and collaboration with Indigenous peoples.
- The MOU and legislation are to govern the collaborative approach being used to undertake the work of implementing the UN Declaration, including the co-development of an initial five-year Action Plan that will set priorities for a review ensuring GNWT policies and legislation are consistent with the Declaration.

### **Links**

- [United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples](#)
- [Plain Language Summary of United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Implementation Act.](#)

**For more information, contact:**

Boyd Clark  
Acho Dene Koe First Nation  
Advisor/Band Manager  
[administration@adkfirstnation.ca](mailto:administration@adkfirstnation.ca)

Annie Boucher  
Executive Director  
Akaitcho Territory Government  
[executive.director@akaitcho.ca](mailto:executive.director@akaitcho.ca)

Joseph Kochon  
Senior Administrative Officer  
Behdzi Ahda' First Nation  
[jfk@behdziahda.com](mailto:jfk@behdziahda.com)

Paulina Roche  
Chief Executive Officer  
Délıne Got'ıne Government  
[paulina.roche@gov.deline.ca](mailto:paulina.roche@gov.deline.ca)

Stephanie Irlbacher-Fox, PhD  
Director, Intergovernmental Relations  
[Intergovernmental.Director@gov.deline.ca](mailto:Intergovernmental.Director@gov.deline.ca)

Alison de Pelham  
Executive Director  
Dehcho First Nations  
[Executivedirector@dehcho.org](mailto:Executivedirector@dehcho.org)

Angela Tripathy  
Chief Executive Officer  
Gwich'in Tribal Council  
[Angela.Tripathy@gwichintribal.ca](mailto:Angela.Tripathy@gwichintribal.ca)

Tony Devlin  
Senior Communications Advisor  
Gwich'in Tribal Council  
[Tony.Devlin@gwichintribal.ca](mailto:Tony.Devlin@gwichintribal.ca)

Alexandrea Gordon  
Manager, Communications  
Inuvialuit Regional Corporation  
[a.gordon@inuvialuit.com](mailto:a.gordon@inuvialuit.com)

Karen Tingmiak  
Acting Senior Administrative Officer  
Fort Good Hope (K'asho Got'ıne) Dene Band  
[sao@fortgoodhope.ca](mailto:sao@fortgoodhope.ca)

Alex Gresl  
Chief Executive Officer  
Kát'odeeche First Nation  
[kfnceo@katlodeeche.com](mailto:kfnceo@katlodeeche.com)

Soham Srimani  
Band Manager  
Nahanni Butte Dene Band  
[manager@nahadehe.ca](mailto:manager@nahadehe.ca)

Marc Whitford  
Acting President/Vice President  
North Slave Métis Alliance  
[mgwhitford@northwestel.net](mailto:mgwhitford@northwestel.net)

Ursula Vogt  
Executive Director  
Northwest Territory Métis Nation  
[director@nwtmetis.ca](mailto:director@nwtmetis.ca)

Elizabeth Westwell  
Chief Executive Officer  
Salt River First Nation  
[ceo.srfn@northwestel.net](mailto:ceo.srfn@northwestel.net)

Orlena Modeste  
Executive Director  
Sahtu Secretariat Incorporated  
[ssi.ed@sahtu.ca](mailto:ssi.ed@sahtu.ca)

Bertha Rabesca Zoe  
Tłıchq Government  
Director, Department of Planning and  
Partnerships  
[bertha.rabescazoe@tlichq.ca](mailto:bertha.rabescazoe@tlichq.ca)

Cecilia Rabesca  
Tłıchq Government  
Manager: Policies and Communications  
[cecilia.rabesca@tlichq.ca](mailto:cecilia.rabesca@tlichq.ca)

