

LAND CLAIMS AGREEMENTS COALITION



Council of Yukon First Nations
Grand Council of the Crees (Eeyou Istchee)
Gwich'in Tribal Council
Inuvialuit Regional Corporation
Kwanlin Dun First Nation
Makivik Corporation

Naskapi Nation of Kawawachikamach
Nisga'a Nation
Nunatsiavut Government
Nunavut Tunngavik Incorporated
The Sahtu Secretariat Incorporated
Tlicho Government

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Coalition united to intensify efforts to ensure Governments honour, respect and accommodate Treaty Implementation

(May 15, 2009, Ottawa, Ontario) The Land Claims Agreements Coalition concluded its third national conference on the implementation of modern Aboriginal land claims and self-government agreements yesterday afternoon. Held over two days, the conference, *Claiming Our Future: Implementing Land Claims Agreements for Social and Economic Prosperity*, focused on the vast array of opportunities for social, economic and cultural prosperity, nationally and in the international sphere, available to Aboriginal peoples through modern land claims agreements.

Conference speakers and delegates commented on the various barriers facing Aboriginal land claims organizations in the full and proper implementation of their treaties—the most significant being the federal government's failure to deliver on many of the important promises embodied in the agreements. While Aboriginal land claims organizations have often felt discouraged and frustrated by Canada's lack of response to their treaty implementation concerns, the Conference's success confirmed the commitment of these Aboriginal groups to work together towards a renewed approach to the implementation of land claims agreements in Canada.

The Coalition also expressed frustration and disappointment that the Minister of Indian and Northern Affairs cancelled his appearance at the conference and then denied the commitment. The Land Claims Agreements Coalition, however, will continue to approach all appropriate Government departments and agencies as part of its efforts.

In his conference closing remarks, Kevin McKay of the Nisga'a Nation pledged as follows: "Our treaties will not go away. The Coalition will not go away. Rather, we will continue our work to ensure that the promises of our treaties are fulfilled."

Coalition Co-Chair, Paul Kaludjak of Nunavut Tunngavik Inc., said important themes of the conference were economic certainty, self-sufficiency, improvement of quality of life and investment in the future of Aboriginal peoples. The Conference featured intensive working group discussions focused on ways for land claims organizations to leverage the assets and resources of modern treaties to promote economic development and prosperity among Aboriginal peoples. Conference delegates also discussed the role of international initiatives in treaty implementation, including the ways in which international collaboration can be garnered to support local, Aboriginal-driven initiatives.

Since 1975, the Canadian Government has entered into 22 modern land claims agreements with Aboriginal peoples across Canada. These agreements involve no less than half of Canada's land, water and natural resources, and embody the government-to-government relationships that exist between Aboriginal signatories and the Crown. While each agreement is unique, all include promises of employment, education, cultural protection, training, socio-economic development opportunities, and more.

On March 3, 2009, the Coalition released a model national policy on the implementation of modern land claims agreements in Canada. While Canada's political leadership has not yet responded to the policy, the Coalition today confirmed its commitment to continue to work together, in unity, on treaty implementation initiatives. As Mr. McKay further concluded, "In that unity, I have every confidence that we will find success."

The Land Claims Agreements Coalition, formed in 2003, is an association of Aboriginal groups that have signed modern treaties. The Coalition's primary purpose is to ensure that these agreements are respected, honoured and fully implemented. For more information, please visit www.landclaimscoalition.ca

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