

# the Gwich'in News

*Welcome to the first issue of the new Gwich'in Tribal Council newsletter, provisionally titled "the Gwich'in News".*

President Fred Carmichael and his team at the Tribal Council decided to create this publication to inform you and your fellow Gwich'in Beneficiaries about GTC decisions, programs and activities and events of general interest.

This edition focuses on the successful Annual General Assembly held in Inuvik from August 20-23, covering the major discussions, presentations and Resolutions passed. Future editions will keep you "in the loop" on GTC Board meetings and decisions; the operations of the Gwich'in Development Corporation, our business arm, and other developments affecting the Gwich'in Nation. We will keep you up to date on what your friends and neighbours in the four Gwich'in communities and Beneficiaries outside the Settlement Region are doing. Our plan is to publish four regular editions a year, one in each season, as well as a special issue highlighting each year's Assembly.



PHOTO: GWICH'IN SOCIAL & CULTURAL INSTITUTE

*IN LOVING MEMORY OF "JIJUU" SARAH SIMON  
MAY 13, 1901 ~ NOVEMBER 2, 2001.*

*Since this is your publication, we want your input. We welcome letters, photographs and story suggestions.*

*Please send any contributions to:*

**Gwich'in News  
P.O. Box 1549  
Inuvik, NT.  
XOE OTO.**

*To ensure that you get each and every issue, please make a point of keeping the Enrolment Board informed of your current address.*

*We thank you for welcoming "Gwich'in News" as a guest in your home and look forward to hearing from you.*

*Our email is:  
gglprint@inuvik.net*

*Mahsi Cho, one and all.*

# the President

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Greetings to all the beneficiaries! I am pleased to serve you as the President of the Gwich'in Tribal Council. I have been given the task of working with the leadership and each of you to ensure that I respond to the needs of all beneficiaries and to assist us in moving towards our vision of "Gwich'in land, culture and economy for a better future."

As President I am working diligently to meet your expectations. One of the commitments I made at our Assembly in August 2001 was to enhance our ability to communicate with each of you.

With the launching of this quarterly Newsletter I will ensure each of you will be better informed of what is happening in the Gwich'in Tribal Council.

I thank you for your continued support and I look forward to working hard and making progress on the path we are taking to "get our house in order." We can move forward as an organization and each of you can say you are proud to be a Gwich'in!

I look forward to hearing from you with suggestions on how we can improve upon our Newsletter.

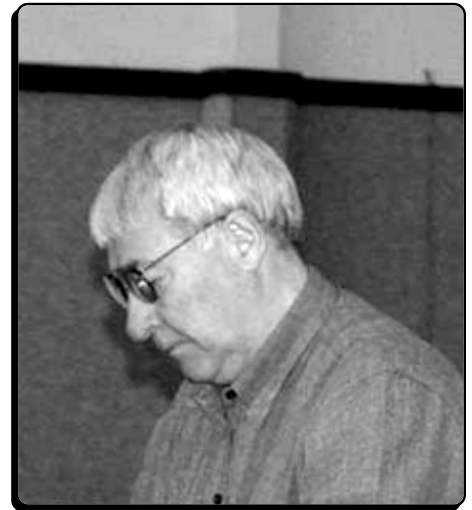


PHOTO: ROBERT ALEXIE

*President Fred Carmichael*

Thank you, Massi Cho, and God Bless You!

Fred Carmichael  
President



PHOTO: ROBERT ALEXIE

*Chief Peter Ross, Chief Abe Wilson, Vice-President Wilbert Firth, Chief Charlie Furlong and President Fred Carmichael*

# the Unity Issues

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At one point in this year's GTC Annual General Assembly, President Fred Carmichael reiterated that he sought the position in order to help his people, to "give something back." And at the Assembly he was "glad to see so much evidence of unity". In fact, the strong political unity of the Gwich'in people and their leadership, along with support for reforms to strengthen this spirit, were two of the most striking features of the Assembly.

Fred Carmichael reminded the Assembly that in the past many Gwich'in saw the GTC organization as too "top-down". To remedy that he has relied on a "management team" of the GTC Executive and the Chiefs of the four communities. The Chiefs, in their capacity as recognized traditional community leaders, bring the concerns of each community to the table, ensuring that grassroots voices are heard in GTC decision-making. All four Chiefs, James B. Firth of Inuvik, Peter Ross of Tsiigehtchic, Abe Wilson of Fort McPherson and Charles Furlong of Aklavik, praised the new spirit of cooperation under this arrangement.

For several years the GTC Organizational Review process has considered ways of reforming the GTC's structure. **Resolution #08/2001** amends By-law number 1, to implement some of the key Organizational Review recommendations. To ensure greater continuity of leadership, "the term of office of the Executive shall be four years". Instead of the costly and cumbersome process of staggered

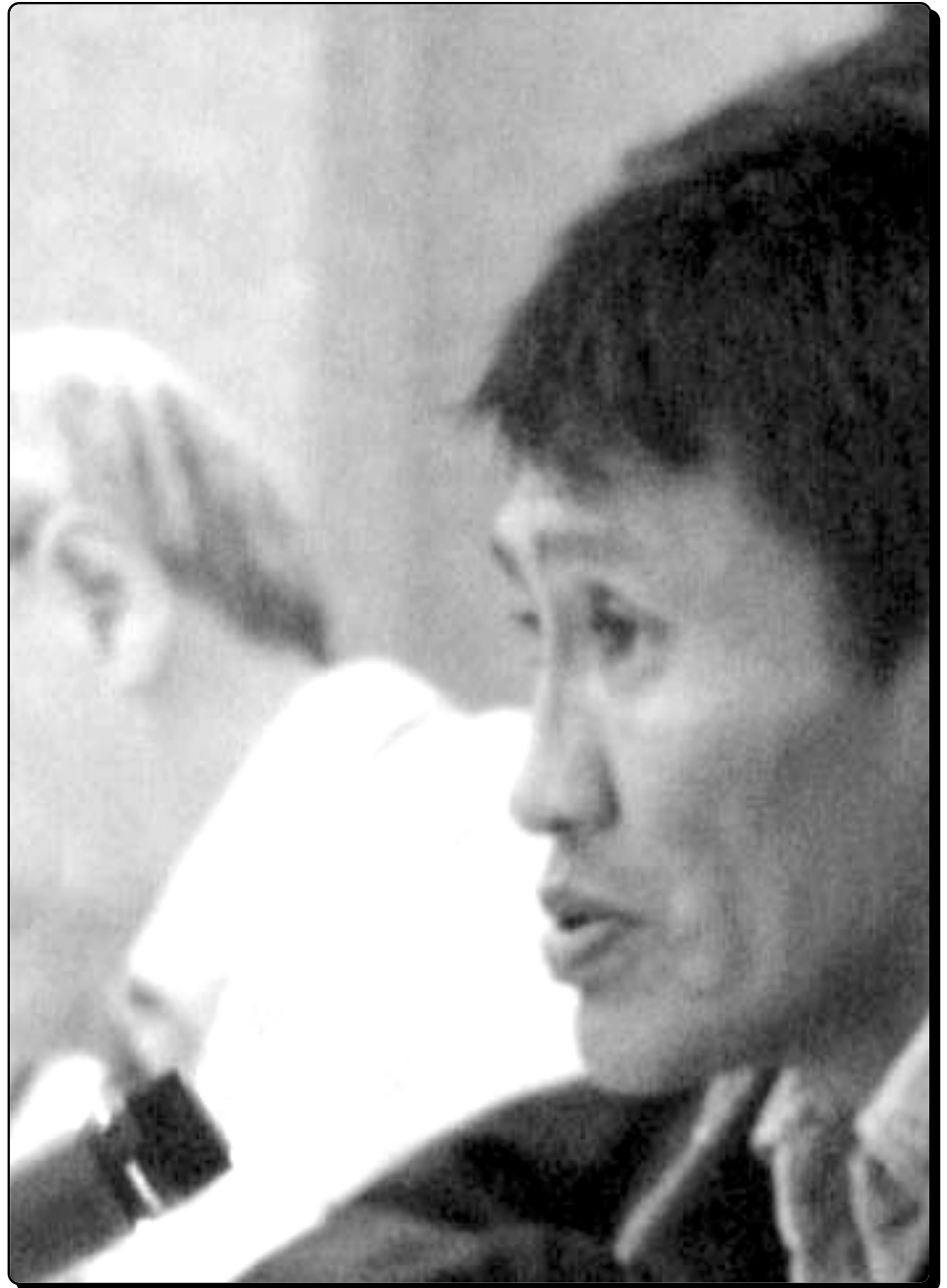


PHOTO: ROBERT ALEXIE

*Chief Abe Wilson discusses Unity issues while President Carmichael listens.*

elections with an election each year all Executive members will be elected at the same time. To guarantee a more transparent election process, there will be a fixed date for elections, "at the third week of June in the year an election is scheduled" and past recommendations to strengthen the

position of Chief Returning Officer will be implemented in By-law changes. To save money on Executive salaries, "there shall be one Vice-President" rather than two.

In his presentation to the Assembly on the Organization Review, Chief

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# the Social Issues

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This year's GTC Annual General Assembly show-cased the ongoing commitment of the Gwich'in people and leadership to meeting Gwich'in social and cultural needs. In the discussion on political, economic and social direction, President Fred Carmichael noted that future development within the Settlement Area must "respect the Land Claim, respect the land, respect the people".

Delegates agreed that economic development is vital but is often accompanied by social problems. This was recognized in **Resolution #18/2001**, which points out that "there is a need for addiction counselors' services because of the increase in economic and employment opportunities and business ventures" but that "there is a lack of funding to hire and train addiction counselors". The Resolution recommends that the GTC and GDC "look at adequate funding for the communities to hire and train addiction counselors". It also instructs the GTC to seek money to hire and train counselors in negotiations with oil and gas companies operating in the Settlement Region.

**Resolution #21/2001** instructed the GTC to "request that the oil and gas industry conduct cross cultural awareness workshops for southern staff". It called on the GNWT to "provide more programs and services to deal with the social issues resulting from development" and advocated the



PHOTO: ROBERT ALEXIE

*Hazel Nerysoo, Shawna Nerysoo, Annie Jane Modeste & Peter James Vittrekwa.*

establishment of banking services in Gwich'in communities "to provide improved access and money management by employees of industry".

Tl'oondih Healing Camp, owned by the GTC, has yet to become a profitable venture, and Fort McPherson's Tetlit Gwich'in Council has expressed its willingness to take over the camp and try to put it on a profitable footing. Not long before the Assembly, the GTC Board endorsed transfer of the camp, at the urging of Fort McPherson Chief Abe Wilson. The Assembly passed **Resolution #11/2001**, which instructs the GTC and the Tetlit Gwich'in Council to "develop a marketing strategy for the utilization of the Healing Camp and a financial plan to ensure the Healing Camp operations are viable and self-sustaining".

The Assembly also approved **Resolution #12/2001**, directing the

GTC to approach the GNWT to make income support and social housing available to minors since current eligibility requirements "do not provide the necessary assistance to minors that are living independently from their parents". **Resolution #17/2001** encouraged the GNWT and Aurora College to meet the housing needs of Aurora College students, since plans for the construction of a new campus facility within the next year "do not include residence for students other than existing inadequate family accommodations".

In Tsiigehtchic, dirty and foul-smelling water has been a problem for some time, and the GNWT has not agreed to pay for filters required to treat the water. Without such funding, Chief Peter Ross reported to the Assembly, the Charter Community would have to pass the cost on to householders. **Resolution #13/2001** reiterates that "the Gwich'in

# the Social Issues

PHOTO: ROBERT ALEXIE



*Catherine Mitchell and Florence Carmichael listen before addressing the Assembly.*

Comprehensive Land Claim Agreement provides for the maintenance of the quantity and quality of water” and instructs the GTC to request that the GNWT pay for the required treatment.

Issues relating to wildlife and the land also loomed large at the Assembly. The GNWT has proposed an amendment to the NWT Wildlife Act which would lower the residency requirement for hunting from 2 years to 6 months, affecting the ability of the Gwich’in to harvest wildlife. **Resolution #09/2001** stated that “the Gwich’in Tribal Council Annual Assembly does not support the proposed Wildlife Act amendment” and instructed the Executive and Board to lobby MLAs to oppose the measure.

The Chairman of the Porcupine Caribou Management Board, Joe Tetlich, spoke to the Assembly about the potentially decisive forthcoming vote by the U.S.

Senate on oil activity in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge (ANWR). In response to this presentation, the Assembly adopted **Resolution #10/2001**, which stated “the health and the productivity of the Porcupine Caribou Herd, the availability to our communities, and the very future of our people are endangered by proposed oil development in the caribou calving grounds” in ANWR. The resolution noted the GTC “provides financial support to help in the lobbying and public awareness efforts to help protect the calving ground” and urged it to supply immediate continued financial and political support to organizations working to protect ANWR.

Further measures to promote Gwich’in social and cultural development may arise from Resolutions that were presented at this Assembly but deferred for subsequent consideration. One Resolution noted “the Gwich’in

need higher levels of education to implement land claims and self-government and manage their own businesses and economic development”, proposing the GTC create an Education and Training Trust Fund from the Sahtu Royalty settlement for the purpose. It also called for the Federal and Territorial Governments to match the GTC contribution to this fund.

Another deferred Resolution referred to the role of the Gwich’in Social and Cultural Institute (GSCI), which the GTC created to promote a wide range of social and cultural initiatives but which “has not received the authority or adequate funding to implement the objectives”. The Resolution also pointed out that other GTC institutions and processes pursue similar objectives, fragmenting resources.

It proposed that the GSCI work with the communities to develop a social plan to meet social, educational and cultural objectives more effectively and improve the relations between the relevant Gwich’in institutions. Finally, it proposes that revenues from the Sahtu Royalty be provided to the GSCI to implement its renewed mandate.

**The complete texts of all Resolutions presented to the GTC Annual General Assembly have been distributed to Band Offices, and the Minutes of the Assembly itself will be distributed later in October.**

# the Economic Issues

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**B**uilding a secure economic base was a central theme of this year's GTC Annual General Assembly. Delegates discussed how to take advantage of the opportunities presented by the current oil and gas boom and to build Gwich'in business capabilities for the long term.

Following direction from previous Assemblies, the GTC has now separated the daily operations of its business arm, the Gwich'in Development Corporation (GDC) from GTC politics. GTC President Fred Carmichael and the four Chiefs no longer sit on the GDC Board, which now has nine "non-political" members with business backgrounds.

The GDC's new Chief Executive Officer, Tom Connors, recounted the GDC's progress, from a net loss of \$600,000 in 2000 to an estimated net income of \$600,000 for 2001. He also outlined a strategy for future expansion, involving organic growth, building on core competencies like trucking and construction and forming partnerships with companies whose resources and capabilities complement those of the GDC and its subsidiaries. He also emphasized infrastructure development and control of the profitable Edmonton-Inuvik transportation route. A press release he distributed at the Assembly announced the formation of a joint venture by the GDC and Ensign Resource



PHOTO: ROBERT ALEXIE

*Chief James Firth weighs what is ultimately best for the beneficiaries.*

Service Group, with the GDC owning 51%. The new company, Gwich'in Ensign Oilfield Services (GEOS) will provide drilling rig and other oilfield services in the Settlement Area. In its approach to future activity in the GSA, the GDC will operate as a General Contractor, subcontracting business to communities and local Gwich'in businesses where it can. This approach will ensure that everyone has a chance to benefit.

Delegates passed **Resolution #14/2001**, in response to the

Yukon Government's call for nominations in the Primary and Secondary Use Areas of the Transboundary Agreement "without proper consultations with the Gwich'in Tribal Council". This Resolution directed the GTC to take steps to ensure proper consultation and stipulated that "all Calls for Nominations include provisions for industry to consult with a view of developing benefit agreements with the Gwich'in Tribal Council in a similar manner allowed for Yukon First Nations". The Assembly also

# the Economic Issues



PHOTO: ROBERT ALEXIE

*Delegates at this year's Annual Assembly work through the many resolutions put before them before voting.*

approved **Resolution #15/2001**, which specified that “the Gwich’in Tribal Council Board of Directors and Executive provide information to the beneficiaries on the activities of the Council in relation to oil and gas development in the Beaufort-Delta Region”, ensuring that Beneficiaries “have information on the involvement of the Gwich’in institutions in that development so they may be prepared and make proper decisions”.

Another issue at the Assembly was the Sahtu Royalty settlement, recently concluded with Ottawa following the Sahtu court case. The settlement will provide the Gwich’in with approximately \$9 million. The Assembly adopted **Resolution #24/2001**, to “direct the Gwich’in Tribal Council Board of Directors to invest the Sahtu Royalty Funds and to develop a strategic

investment plan” to meet Gwich’in needs as well as to “approach the Government of Canada and the Government of the Northwest Territories to develop partnerships in the delivery of programs and services”.

Transport Minister Vince Steen attended the Assembly and made the case for the GNWT’s Highway Investment Strategy to fund improvements to the highway system. In response, Delegates supported **Resolution #22/2001**. The Resolution stated that “the Dempster Highway is an essential economic link to connect the communities of Fort McPherson, Tsiigehtchic and Inuvik and is in need of improvement and to undertake a cost analysis of establishing a link to Aklavik” and proclaimed the backing of the GTC and the Designated Gwich’in Organizations (DGOs) for the

Highway Investment Strategy.

Delegates also looked at the Gwich’in Settlement Corporation investment fund. Following presentations by the GTC’s investment fund manager, TAL Institutional Management and its investment adviser, Towers Perrin, the Assembly adopted **Resolution #16/2001**. This instructed the GTC to “conduct a review of the management structure of the Gwich’in Settlement Corporation investment fund and to make whatever changes may be required as a result of that review and as required by the investment policies of the fund”. This review could lead to greater diversification of the Settlement Corporation portfolio through recruitment of a second investment fund manager, a measure often taken by organizations with very large investment funds.

# the Unity Issues

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Self-Government Negotiator Bob Simpson said that the Organization Review also recommends a number of purely technical changes, which were given effect by the Resolution, as well as long-term changes related to governance. The Resolution also provides for these long-term changes to be discussed in a process of community consultations as devised by the GTC Board.

**Resolution #20/2001** changed the title of the GTC President to Grand Chief “in order to clearly identify to others the leader of the Gwich’in Tribal Council”, pointing out that “the Gwich’in have always used the term ‘Chief’ to identify and address their leaders” and “our present leaders of the four Gwich’in communities still use the title of ‘Chief’”.

The mood of unity and renewal was reflected in **Resolution #23/2001**, moved by Chief Charles Furlong, which embodied the belief of the leadership that in this time of restructuring “a new vision statement is needed to guide them in providing leadership to meet the demands and concerns of the communities”.

The Resolution stated that “the Assembly endorse in confidence the Gwich’in leadership” and called on the Executive and Board to “develop an action plan to address the political, economic and social development of the Gwich’in to meet the goals and objectives of the Gwich’in Tribal Council and its subsidiary institutions”.



PHOTO: ROBERT ALEXIE

*Elaine Alexie asks questions at the GTC Annual Assembly in Inuvik.*

**Resolution #19/2001** made clear that “the Gwich’in Tribal Council has governmental authorities and responsibilities” and proposed that “the Gwich’in Tribal Council and associated institutions be fully recognized by the Government of Canada and Government of the Northwest Territories as a government for the purpose of enjoying the same benefits and tax exemptions as other existing governments”.

The unity that dominated the Assembly was clear when former GTC President Richard Nerysoo announced that “Fred Carmichael and the Chiefs have my unconditional support”, with Fred Carmichael in turn thanking him and expressing his pleasure that even where there had been disagreement at the Assembly, it had been expressed in a “spirit of solidarity”.