

Council Update

2023 Number 2 | March 17, 2023

Chief Frost was in Ottawa last week for the Land Claims Agreement Coalition (LCAC) National Conference and Leadership Meeting. Council also advanced several important initiatives including:

- an amendment to the Governance Act to allow for part time employment of Councillors, several amendments to our Financial Transfer Agreement (FTA) that provide additional funding for post-secondary education, mental wellness and violence protection programming and community infrastructure.
- In total, Vuntut Gwitchin Government is set to receive an additional \$600,000 for Fiscal Year 2022/2023 and \$400,000 for Fiscal Year 2023/2024 to the base of our FTA.



Stephen Mills, Katriel Villacorta, and Chief Frost outside the Confederation Building in Ottawa. Photo: Liz Staples.

LCAC National Conference and Leadership Meeting

Chief Frost met with the federal Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Minister Marc Miller. She was joined by VGG's new Implementation and Negotiations Advisor Stephen Mills, Liz Staples, Intergovernmental Relations Coordinator and Katriel Villacorta, who attended the LCAC Conference as a student with Yukon University.

Chief Frost shared with Minister Miller the challenges we are facing with the ongoing mental health and substance abuse crisis and with infrastructure and capacity in providing core services. She highlighted some of the efforts we are taking to address these challenges as well as the additional support needed.

We look forward to continuing conversations with Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada.



Chief Frost with the federal Crown-Indigenous Relations Minister Marc Miller. Photo: Liz Staples.

Release of new federal Collaborative Modern Treaty Implementation Policy

Also at the LCAC Conference, Minister Miller announced the release of Canada's *Collaborative Modern Treaty Implementation Policy* (see the **Backgrounder on page 4**). Co-developed with modern treaty partners, the policy addresses challenges standing in the way of full implementation of modern treaties across Canada.

Chief Frost was encouraged by the new policy announcement, and sees it as meaningful step forward on Indigenous-Crown relations. At the same time, Chief remains focused on the fact that there is still a significant amount of work to be done to advance treaty implementation in Canada, and more specifically in the interests of present and future generations of VGGN Citizens.

Caribou and Salmon Protection

On the first day of the LCAC Conference Chief Frost joined Gwich'in Tribal Council Grand Chief Ken Kyikavichik and Makivik Vice President Adamie Delisle-Alaku, as a speaker in a session focused on protecting caribou and salmon.

Chief Frost shared the critical importance of Vadzaih (caribou) and salmon and challenges faced; examined the strengths and limitations of our *Final and Self Government Agreements* and national/international legislation and agreements in protecting Vadzaih and salmon and shared examples of the leadership Vuntut Gwitchin in fighting for their long-term protection.

Food Security

On the second day of the LCAC Conference Chief Frost spoke at a breakout session focused on food security initiatives. Chief Frost shared

the challenges we face as a northern fly-in community and the critical importance of initiatives focused on protecting our traditional foods at local, national, and international levels.



Chief Frost presenting at the Protecting Caribou and Salmon breakout session. Photo: Liz Staples.

Leadership Meeting

Following the LCAC Conference, Chief Frost attended the LCAC Leadership Meeting which was an opportunity for the leadership of modern treaties to discuss shared challenges and possible paths forward to ensuring our land claims and self-government agreements are respected, honoured and fully implemented.

The leadership discussed other important initiatives including the new *Collaborative Modern Treaty Implementation Policy*, the federal Interpretation Act and the *UN Declaration on the Rights Indigenous Peoples Act Action Plan*.

These national conferences and leadership meetings offer a space for connection, conversation and relationship building to support full implementation of modern treaties and improved relationships. VGG will continue to work within the LCAC at technical and leadership levels.



The Tetlit Gwich'in Dancers performing on the first day of the LCAC National Conference. *Photo: Liz Staples.*

Mahsi' choo to the Tetlit Gwich'in Dancers for sharing traditional dances and bringing great energy to first day of the LCAC National Conference.

We are so proud of these young dancers and all the work they do to represent their communities and the Gwich'in Nation.

Act to Amend the Vuntut Gwitchin Governance Act (2023)

Council also had the second reading of the *Act to Amend the Governance Act* which builds off work undertaken by the previous

administration modernize job descriptions and wage bands and accounts for changes the remuneration for Chief, Deputy Chief, and Councillors. The new act aligns the salaries of members of Council with the overall VGG salary structure.

In addition, the new *Act to Amend the Governance Act* allows for part-time employment of Vuntut Gwitchin Government Councillors. The overall workload for each Councillor will be determined by Council through a resolution.

Backgrounder: Canada's Collaborative Modern Treaty Implementation Policy



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View online: [Backgrounder: Canada's Collaborative Modern Treaty Implementation Policy](#)

From the Modern Treaties are concluded with Indigenous Nations, partners, organizations, the Crown, and provincial/territorial governments as signatories. They provide clarity and predictability with respect to land rights, ownership, resource management, and the rights defined in them are constitutionally protected under section 35 of the *Constitution Act*, 1982.

Modern Treaties promote strong and sustainable Indigenous communities while advancing national socio-economic objectives that benefit all Canadians.

Before 2000, Modern Treaties were negotiated in the form of comprehensive land claim agreements, and only a few Modern Treaty partners negotiated self-government agreements separately. Since 2000, all Modern Treaties have included provisions for self-government.

Since 1975, when Canada signed the first Modern Treaty, the *James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement*, 26 Modern Treaties have come into effect. Eighteen of these include provisions for self-government or have accompanying self-government agreements.

Canada's Collaborative Modern Treaty Implementation Policy

Canada's *Collaborative Modern Treaty Implementation Policy* will advance reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples and support the full, effective, and timely implementation of all Modern Treaties in Canada.

Leaders from the Land Claims Agreement Coalition met with Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations, Marc Miller, in February 2022. They called for improvements to Modern Treaty implementation, and a collaborative policy development process began shortly thereafter. In late October 2022, the final draft of *Canada's Collaborative Modern Treaty Implementation Policy* was completed.

This policy includes a number of elements that will significantly improve the implementation of Modern Treaties and the relationship between Indigenous Modern Treaty signatories and the Crown.

Modern Treaty Partners and Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada (CIRNAC) worked under an ambitious schedule to co-develop the Policy and supporting tools that include the following elements:

Key principles to guide Modern Treaty implementation - The policy sets out key principles that will guide federal officials to implement Modern Treaties in a way that reflects their spirit and intent.

Clear direction to deputy heads - The policy directs that deputy heads are responsible for overseeing the full, timely, and effective implementation of modern treaties.

This clear direction is intended to improve accountability in achieving the objectives of Modern Treaties and will motivate change at both an individual and systems level.

Legislative, policy, and program design - The policy requires that legislative, policy, and program design take into account and reflect the unique circumstances of each Modern Treaty partner.

Distinctions-based approach - The policy recognizes that Modern Treaty partners are a distinct group within distinctions-based approaches. Modern Treaties form part of the constitutional framework of Canada and represent a distinct expression of reconciliation.

Intergovernmental Leaders Forum - The launching of an Intergovernmental Leaders Forum, comprised of the Prime Minister and Modern Treaty and Self-Government leadership, will create the opportunity for leaders to come together to work on shared priorities.

Intergovernmental Policy Circle - The establishment of an Intergovernmental Policy Circle will continue to build relationships and advance matters of importance to all parties. The Circle will provide a space for Modern Treaty partners and federal departments to work collaboratively on cross-cutting implementation challenges, and legislative, policy, and program initiatives.

Independent oversight and accountability - Over the next six months, CIRNAC and Modern Treaty Partners will co-develop recommendations for an independent oversight and accountability mechanism. These recommendations will be evaluated to ensure they meet the needs of all partners while addressing the complexities of the new Policy.

Commitments to future work - *Canada's Collaborative Modern Treaty Implementation Policy* also includes a list of commitments to future work to improve intergovernmental relations and to derive the full benefits of Modern Treaties. This section recognizes that the announcement of the Policy and tools are just the first phase of ongoing work.

Canada will continue to engage with Indigenous Modern Treaty partners to co-develop solutions to priority items set out within Section 8 of the Policy. They may also agree to identify other issues to be addressed in the future.

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