



DEHCHO FIRST NATIONS

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DEHCHO GRAND CHIEF TO MEET MINISTERS OVER LAND USE PLANNING

Fort Simpson – The central issue of land use planning will be on the agenda Monday when Grand Chief Herb Norwegian of the Dehcho First Nation (DFN) meets with two cabinet ministers who represent the interests of the Dehcho in the Government of the Northwest Territories.

Norwegian will take a serious message of concern about the GNWT's position on land use planning in the on-going land claims negotiations between the Dehcho, Canada and the NWT when he meets Transport and Public Utilities Minister Kevin Menicoche (Nahendeh) and Industry, Tourism and Investment Minister Mike McLeod (Dehcho).

“There is a stalemate in the negotiations between Canada and the Dehcho over the issue of the Land Use Planning Committee's final draft land use plan,” Norwegian said.

The LUPC, set up five years ago by all parties to the negotiation presented a draft land use plan to the parties on June 12, 2006. The final draft land use plan has been unanimously approved by the DFN but has been delayed by the Canada, who recently changed its position without advance notice. The federal minister of Indian and Northern Affairs says he will not agree to the highly praised report until an Agreement-in-Principle (AiP) has been approved. The GNWT, which is also a party to the negotiations, appears to support the federal position and Norwegian would like to know why:

“When the land use planning committee submitted its final draft land use plan after several years of intensive study research, and consultation, combining the best of science and Dehcho traditional knowledge, it was hailed both in the North and across Canada, even internationally, as one of the best ever produced. We accepted it as the centrepiece of our work and we are determined to keep it that way,” Norwegian said before leaving Fort Simpson for Yellowknife.

The Interim Measures Agreement (IMA), which all three parties to the negotiations agreed to, established and funded the land use committee with more than \$4 million during the five years of its work. Suddenly, according to the Dehcho negotiators, the Federal and Territorial governments announced there would be no further advance on the land use committee's work until an AiP was reached, a violation of the IMA.

“The feds don't like some aspects of the report, they say there is too much conservation land set aside. The GNWT just seems to go along with Canada. We would like to see the territorial government take its own position, not tied to a federal AiP but ready to

negotiate the final draft land use plan,” Norwegian said. “The work of this committee must be kept going.”

Ends

For further information, please contact Grand Chief Herb Norwegian (867) 695-2355/2610.

Dehcho Land Use Planning Committee web-site: www.dehcholands.org