



DEHCHO FIRST NATIONS

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Dehcho negotiations rebound

The Dehcho Process is back in full swing after a one day video conference session on Wednesday.

Negotiators representing Dehcho First Nations, Canada and the government of the NWT gathered to get Canada's response to a recent motion passed by Dehcho Leaders.

The motion, passed two weeks ago, gave DFN permission to approach negotiations with more flexibility so a variety of issues could be addressed at the same time. Canada had refused to negotiate since last year because DFN negotiators hadn't been given a clear mandate to engage in a land selection process until after the completion of the Dehcho Land Use Plan.

Tim Christian, Chief Negotiator for Canada, says the leadership motion was seen very positively in Ottawa. "We are interested in getting to main table issues as quickly as possible."

DFN Chief Negotiator Georges Erasmus says too much time has been wasted. "Now we need to move forward very quickly and make up for lost time. We want some positive results to bring to this year's Assembly in June."

The main table discussions will resume in April where negotiators hope to tackle key issues such as land quantum, eligibility and education from kindergarten to grade 12.

DFN Grand Chief Gerald Antoine says, "It's a challenge as to how we need to move ahead, we have to make sure that community members and leaders are fully engaged. If communities aren't part of the process then it will hit new snags very quickly."

The negotiators have developed a work schedule for the next year and half, with the high hope of reaching an Agreement in Principle by June 2010.