



DEHCHO FIRST NATIONS

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE – May 27, 2011

DFN Reaffirm Commitment to Treaties and Negotiations

Leaders and elders representing the eleven organizations of the Dehcho First Nations emerged from a three day Think Tank in Trout Lake with a firm resolve to use their negotiations with Canada to build upon and clarify Treaties 11 and 8.

The DFN are engaged in negotiations under Canada's Comprehensive Claims process on an agreement which will set out clear understandings on land ownership, resource management and self-government. The negotiations, known as the Dehcho Process, have been ongoing since 1999 and have faced the challenge of bridging the gap between Canada's position, that it acquired ownership of Dene lands in the Treaties, and the Dene version of the Treaties, which holds that the treaties were peace and friendship agreements in which the Dene did not surrender any of their land.

DFN leaders reaffirmed that the Dehcho Process should result in an agreement which recognizes a fair and equitable sharing of lands and resources, affirms their traditional harvesting rights, and implements land use planning and joint management of resources throughout the traditional territory of the Dehcho. They also called on both federal and DFN negotiators to intensify their efforts over the next six months to make progress towards an Agreement-in-Principle.

Grand Chief Gargan said: "The Dehcho First Nations are faced with many difficult choices and challenges and we are prepared to make an earnest effort to reach an agreement in a timely manner. We call on Prime Minister Harper to instruct his negotiators to work with us to reach a unique and honourable agreement which respects the promises made in our original treaties to live together and share the land. If we are to honour our elders and leave a lasting legacy for future generations we must come to an agreement which ensures the protection of ecologically sensitive area, the equitable sharing of resources, and good government for all residents of the Dehcho."

The Dehcho First Nations are a tribal council representing nine Dene communities and two Metis communities in the south-west part of the NWT.

The leadership thanks the community of Trout Lake for their great hospitality in taking care of all the delegates. Mahsi Cho

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