

Dene National Assembly

Resolution # 1

Re: Constitutional Reform - Preamble, Definitions and Objectives

Whereas the Dene National Chief was elected on a mandate to promote and defend the unity of the Dene Nation, in part by reforming the Constitution and By-laws of the Dene Nation; and

Whereas the Dene National Chief appointed a Constitutional Reform Commission (CRC), which includes both a Chiefs Working Group and a technical group; and

Whereas the CRC has conducted consultations with Dene leaders and communities while developing a proposed new Constitution and By-law for the Dene Nation; and

Whereas the provisions of the proposed new Constitution and By-laws represent a better and more accurate description of the mandate, objectives and structure of the Dene Nation,

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT:

1. The following preamble, Objectives and Mission Statement of the existing By-law are hereby repealed:

PREAMBLE

WHEREAS the Dene were blessed by the Creator to be the caretakers of Denendeh, including the land, water, air and animals; and

WHEREAS the Dene have traditionally used and occupied our land in and adjacent to Denendeh since time immemorial; and

WHEREAS the Dene possess Inherent rights to Self-Determination as a Distinct Peoples; and

WHEREAS Dene women, men, youth and Elders uphold and express Equal Rights and Freedoms; and

WHEREAS the Dene have internal peace and friendship Treaties amongst ourselves; and

WHEREAS the Dene recognize the continuing ...uphold, facilitate, coordinate, and assist in the implementation of our individual rights, collective rights...

The OBJECTS of the DENE NATION are:

- a. To uphold the rights and interests of the Dene Peoples of the Northwest Territories, in reference to their Treaties and otherwise;
- b. To develop, discuss and promote policies for the Dene peoples of the Northwest Territories;
- c. To conduct, foster and support programs and policies for the economic, social, educational, health and cultural benefit of the Dene peoples of the Northwest Territories;
- d. To give voice to the opinions of the Dene peoples of the Northwest Territories;
- e. To co-operate with other organizations of similar or friendly purpose.

MISSION STATEMENT:

The purpose of the Dene Nation is to retain sovereignty by strengthening the Dene spiritual beliefs and cultural values in Denendeh.

2. In place of the repealed provisions, the Preamble and Objectives of the proposed new Constitution are hereby approved:

We the Dene,

- a. are given the sacred spiritual responsibility by the Creator to take care of and live in harmony with Denendeh and each other as stewards of the Land, water, air and animals;
- b. have, since time immemorial, been inseparable from, lived on, occupied, used, shared, governed and defended Land in and adjacent to Denendeh;
- c. respect the laws of nature and recognize our responsibility to Protect and preserve the Land for our children and grandchildren;

- d. possess inherent rights to self-determination as distinct peoples;
- e. recognize that we live in separate, self-governing Territories while maintaining our unity as one Dene Nation;
- f. have oral peace and friendship Treaties amongst ourselves and with other Indigenous Nations;
- g. have peace and friendship Treaties and modern Land and self-government agreements with the Crown;
- h. recognize the equality of all persons and all living things, including the Land, air and water;
- i. recognize the continuing need to uphold, facilitate, coordinate, and assist in the implementation of Dene rights and responsibilities, including our duty to share the benefits of our resources in accordance with Dene laws and customs;
- j. recognize the continuing importance of the 1975 Dene Declaration as a founding document of Dene unity which affirms Dene nationhood;
- k. look to the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples as a guide towards establishing mutually respectful relationships, including between Dene and the Crown;
- l. recognize the continuing importance of the traditional Dene values and principles outlined in the Appendix to this Constitution;
- m. declare that the Dene Nation shall remain at all times an instrument to advance the aspirations of Dene Regions and Dene Communities and shall not become greater in strength, power, resources or jurisdiction than the Regions and Communities for which it was established to serve; and
- n. have created Dene Nation Institutions to accomplish the objectives of the Dene.

1. OBJECTIVES

The objectives of the Dene Nation are to:

- a. promote the unity of our Dene Governments;
- b. respect the jurisdiction and authority of each Dene Government and the authority of each to speak for themselves;
- c. provide a forum in which Dene Regional and Community governments can unite to address issues of common concern;
- d. defend Dene jurisdiction and sovereignty over Dene Lands;
- e. support the sovereignty of the Dene by fostering, developing and implementing programs and services, legislation and policies for the political, economic, social, educational, health, spiritual and cultural self-determination of the Dene;
- f. foster a more equal and just Dene society through striving to eliminate inequalities and injustices, including those brought by colonialism and the *Indian Act*, by returning to Dene traditions;
- g. support initiatives to ensure that our historic and modern Treaties are fully honoured and implemented;
- h. co-ordinate relations between the Dene, our Governments and Dene Nation Institutions and other Indigenous Nations to promote collective advancement;
and
- i. work in partnership with Dene, our governments and Dene Nation Institutions, when requested or required to:
 - i) promote, defend and practise Treaty and other rights, title and interests of the Dene;

ii) promote, defend and practise Dene self-determination, laws, language, culture, ceremonies and customs; or

iii) support the voices of the Dene, our governments and Dene Nation Institutions by advocating for their interests.

2.0 DEFINITIONS

2.1 Words and phrases in this Constitution have the same meaning as those defined in the Organizational By-law of the Dene Nation.

3. And the following provisions of the proposed new Organizational By-law are hereby approved:

Subject to the Constitution of the Dene Nation, this By-Law governs the organization and functioning of the Dene Nation.

1.0 DEFINITIONS

Absentee Voting Delegate means a Voting Delegate who is not personally present at the National Assembly, whether the meeting is held in person or by electronic means.

Annual Assembly or National Assembly means a meeting of Delegates representing the Dene Communities and Territories of the Dene Nation and Annual Assembly means the required annual meeting of Delegates.

CEO means the Chief Executive Officer of the Dene Nation who is responsible for the management, administration and delivery of programs, services and projects, under the direction of the Executive and the National Chief.

Consensus means general agreement on a resolution or decision that takes into account and reconciles the views of all or most in a decision-making process and requires striving to continue discussions until Consensus is reached, but does not necessarily mean unanimity.

Dene Citizen means a person descended from the original people of a Dene Territory, Dene

Community or Independent Dene Community and/or defined as a citizen or member by their respective Dene Community.

Dene Community means a community which has historic and ongoing links to the original peoples of Denendeh, whether or not that Community has a reserve.

Dene Laws means the traditional laws of the Dene, whether oral or written.

Dene Nation means the Dene, the original people of Denendeh.

Dene Nation corporation means the incorporated political organization created to represent the interests of the Dene Nation.

Dene Nation Institutions means structures and organizations created to achieve Dene common objectives, including the Dene Nation corporation, Dene Cultural Institute, the Native Communications Society and the Denendeh Development Corporation.

Dene National Chief means the Dene Citizen elected or chosen at a Dene National Assembly to act as spokesperson of the Dene Nation and chair of the Executive, in accordance with the Constitution and by-laws of the Dene Nation.

Dene Territory means the same as “Dene Regions,”-and includes the Gwich’in, Sahtú, Dehcho, Tłı̨chǫ and Akaitcho Territories. The Dene Territories include the following Dene Communities:

Gwich’in: Inuvik, Aklavik, Tsiigehtchic, and Teetł’it Zheh (Fort McPherson)

Sahtú: K’áhbamítúé (Colville Lake), Tulít’a, Rádeyǰı̨kóé (Fort Good Hope), and Délı̨ne

Dehcho: Acho Dene Koe (Ft. Liard); Deh Gáh Got’iê First Nation (Fort Providence); Jean Marie River First Nation; Ka’a’gee Tu First Nation (Kakisa); Lı́ı̨lǰı̨ Kúé First Nation (Fort Simpson); Nahanni Butte Dene Band; Pehdzeh Ki First Nation (Wrigley); Sambaa K’e First Nation (Trout Lake); West Point First Nation.

Tłı̨chǫ: Behchokò (Rae-Edzo), Whatı̨ (Lac La Martre), Gamèti-(Rae Lakes), and Wekweèti (Snare Lake)

Akaitcho: Deninu K'ue (Fort Resolution), Łutsël K'è, Smiths Landing (Fort Fitzgerald), Dettah, Ndilò and Tadoule Lake (Manitoba).

Dene Elders Council (DEC) means a body comprised of individuals who have gained recognition as custodians of knowledge, and selected in accordance with the Constitution of the Dene Nation.

Director means a voting member of the Executive and Board of Directors means the Executive Committee.

Financial Statement means a financial statement prepared in accordance with generally accepted accounting principles and shall include a statement of financial position or a balance sheet; a statement of comprehensive income or a statement of retained earnings; a statement of any changes in equity or an income statement; and statement of cash flows or a statement of changes in financial position.

Independent Dene Communities means a Dene community which is not affiliated with one of the five Territorial Dene Member Governments referred to in the Constitution. The following are the currently recognized Independent Dene Communities:

Salt River First Nation

Dene Tha' First Nation

Athabasca Chipewyan First Nation

Kátl'odeeche (Hay River Reserve)

Land includes both surface and sub-surface resources.

Leadership means The National Chief, plus the Chiefs of Dene Communities, Grand Chiefs and representatives of the Dene Elders Council.

Members means the Dene Territories, and the Independent Dene Communities.

National Assembly means a meeting of delegates representing the Dene Communities, and

may be held in person or by electronic means.

Officers means those persons appointed by the Executive to hold certain positions, including Secretary and Treasurer.

Present in person means either physically present in the venue where a meeting is taking place or present through alternative means where a meeting is taking place electronically or by teleconference.

Proxy means a Voting Delegate authorized by an Absentee Voting Delegate to cast a vote on their behalf in accordance with their direction.

Resolution means the same as motion and draft resolution means the same as draft motion.

Special Assembly means an Assembly called for a particular purpose as determined by the Executive, Leadership or National Assembly, such as for the amendment of the Constitution.

Special Resolution means a resolution which requires a vote of at least 75% of Voting Delegates voting in favour at a National Assembly.

Voting Delegate means a Dene Citizen chosen by their respective Dene Community or Dene Territory to attend and vote at a National Assembly.

Youth means Dene between the ages of fourteen (14) and twenty four (24).

Moved: Chief Wanda Pascal

Seconded: John Norbert

Date: March 31, 2021, Inuvik