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Dene Leadership Meeting Summary
Dene Deline, NT – February 11-13, 2025

The recent gathering of Dene Nation leaders in Deline marked important moments addressing critical issues affecting their communities. This meeting, attended by leaders in person and remotely, focused on several pressing topics, including child and family welfare, housing initiatives, constitutional reform, and the Western Boreal Initiative. The discussions supported unity, Dene self-sufficiency, and the importance of community input, the need for Dene-led solutions and improved access to funding.

In national negotiations, the Dene Leaders discussed child and family welfare, including the Dene Nation. Dene National Chief George Mackenzie highlighted the initial exclusion of the Dene Nation from these discussions and compensation packages. However, the Dene Nation has now secured a place at the table through persistent advocacy. Stephen Kakfwi provided a historical overview of the child welfare issue, detailing the recent defeat of a proposed settlement agreement at an Assembly of First Nations meeting. This development created a National Children's Chiefs Commission to spearhead new negotiations with the federal government. The Dene Nation is also preparing for potential legal action against Canada to secure compensation related to child welfare services. These steps are crucial for ensuring the unique needs of remote Dene communities.

Housing challenges and potential solutions were another focal point of the meeting. Presentations by Wilbert Cook and April Martel shed light on the current housing issues faced by Dene communities. Chief Danny Gaudet shared innovative ideas for improving housing access, emphasizing the importance of self-sufficiency in housing construction and the need for community input. These discussions highlighted the necessity of developing sustainable housing solutions tailored to the Dene people's needs.

Dene Leaders passed a resolution to further the work on Constitutional reform and the Western Boreal Initiative. The delegation acknowledged a state of emergency regarding drugs in communities was acknowledged as a critical concern, alongside brief mentions of education and homelessness. Although not the main focus, these topics are integral to the broader agenda of improving the quality of life for Dene communities.

The meeting reaffirmed the importance of Dene-led solutions and the need for better access to funding. The three-day gathering set the phase for future advocacy efforts and negotiations. The Dene Nation is committed to hearing the voices of remote communities and sharing the direction of Dene Chiefs. As the Dene Nation moves forward, the emphasis will remain on unity, self-sufficiency, and community-driven approaches to address their complex challenges.

Resolutions Summary

The Dene Nation unanimously passed three significant resolutions, each addressing critical areas of governance, child welfare, and housing.

Resolution on Updating the Dene Nation Constitution:

The Dene Nation is committed to self-determination and enhancing its governance framework. Recognizing the need for constitutional reform that better reflects the aspirations and values of the Dene people, the resolution calls for inclusive engagement with leaders, elders, and delegates. The aim is to present the proposed reforms at the next Dene National Assembly, ensuring all voices are heard. The resolution also mandates the provision of necessary documentation to facilitate informed discussions.

Resolution on Child Welfare and Family Services:

This resolution addresses the disparities in child welfare compensation affecting Dene communities. It emphasizes the need for fair and equitable solutions, drawing on precedents set by other regions like Ontario. The Dene Nation is directed to pursue a national agreement for standardized compensation, advocating for increased funding and resources. A Dene-led working group will guide these efforts, ensuring a strong representation of Dene women and prioritizing Indigenous voices in policy-making. The resolution also calls for a progress report to be presented at the next leadership meeting.

Resolution on Housing Needs:

This resolution acknowledges the urgent housing crisis in Dene communities and underscores the right to safe and affordable housing. It directs the Dene Nation to seek funding from various sources to address housing shortages and improve conditions. A comprehensive work plan will be developed to identify immediate and long-term needs, serving as a guide for resource allocation. A Dene Nation Housing Secretariat will also be established to manage initiatives and funding, ensuring the community's housing needs are met effectively.

Approved: February 18, 2025



George Mackenzie
Dene National Chief & NT AFN Regional Chief George Mackenzie