



Dene National / Assembly of First Nations Office (NWT)

5120- 49th Street
P.O. Box 2338
Yellowknife, NT, X1A 2P7

Phone: (867) 873-4081
Fax: (867) 920-2254
Toll Free: 1-866-511-4081

Website: www.denenation.ca



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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DENE NATIONAL CHIEF EXPRESSES DEEP CONCERN OVER LACK OF INDIGENOUS REPRESENTATION AT TERRITORIAL RECEPTION

[YELLOWKNIFE, NWT, MAY 22, 2025] - Dene National Chief George Mackenzie issues the following statement regarding the May 21, 2025, reception held at the Northwest Territories Legislative Assembly:

The Government of the Northwest Territories (GNWT) has once again demonstrated a concerning disconnect between territorial governance and the people they serve. Yesterday's Western Premiers Conference reception at the Legislative Assembly was a stark reminder of the ongoing challenges Indigenous peoples face in achieving proper recognition and representation in our territory.

Despite Indigenous peoples comprising nearly 50% of the NWT population, with First Nations, Métis, and Inuit peoples representing the largest demographic group in our territory, Indigenous leadership was notably absent from recognition protocols at this significant government event.

"It is deeply troubling that in 2025, in a territory where Indigenous peoples make up 49.6% of the population, our presence and protocols continue to be overlooked at official government functions," stated Dene National Chief George Mackenzie. "The failure of the Deputy Ministers and the Premier to acknowledge Indigenous leadership, particularly the office of the Dene National Chief, speaks volumes about the current state of relationship between the GNWT and Indigenous peoples."

This oversight is particularly concerning given that:

- Indigenous peoples represent the largest demographic group in the NWT at 49.6%
- The territory operates on traditional Indigenous lands
- Indigenous governments are essential partners in governance and decision-making processes
- Constitutional obligations require meaningful consultation and engagement with Indigenous peoples

The Dene Nation reminds government officials to ensure meaningful engagement, and relationship building with Indigenous leadership who represent the majority of the territory's population.



"This is not merely about protocol – it is about respect, recognition, and the fundamental right of Indigenous peoples to be represented in territorial affairs," Chief Mackenzie added. "We call on the GNWT to immediately review its engagement protocols and ensure that future events properly reflect the demographic and political reality of our territory."

The Dene Nation calls for:

1. Formal acknowledgment of this oversight
2. Implementation of proper protocols for Indigenous leadership at all government functions
3. Establishment of clear guidelines ensuring proportional representation at territorial events
4. Meaningful consultation with Indigenous governments on matters of protocol and ceremony

Signed,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'G. Mackenzie', is written over a horizontal line.

George Mackenzie,
Dene National Chief/Regional Chief, Assembly of First Nations – NT

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For more information, please contact:

Leanne Goose, Communications and Community Engagement
Mobile: 587-986-6215 | Email: communications@denenation.com

