



June 5, 2023

Chiefs of Northern Nations Meet to Discuss Community Wellness

OLD CROW –Last month, Chief Pauline Frost of Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation, Chief Dawna Hope of First Nation of Na-Cho Nyäk Dun, Chief Roberta Joseph Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in First Nation and Grand Chief Ken Kyikavichik of the Gwich'in Tribal Council met on May 19 in Old Crow to mark the 30th Anniversary of the signing of the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation Final Agreement and Self-Government Agreement and to discuss collaborative approaches to community wellness and the ongoing mental health and addictions crisis each of their communities are facing.

Chief Frost welcomed the Chiefs to Old Crow who joined the celebrations of the 30th anniversary of the signing of the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation Final Agreement and Self-Government Agreement, as well as the community's annual celebration of *Vadzaih Choo Drin*, Caribou Days. The Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation held a multi-day celebration with fiddlers, dance, music, art, and feasting on traditional foods on the traditional territory of the Vuntut Gwich'in.

The Chiefs took time over the weekend to recognize the achievements of the Elders of their Nations who worked hard to realize a vision of self-determination and self-government, while at the same time highlighting the needs and intense challenges of their communities especially alcoholism and substance abuse arising from a history of colonization, racism, and intergenerational trauma.

Recognizing the need to care for citizens at all stages of their addiction, from harm reduction to treatment to long-term recovery and the critical importance of culturally-appropriate programs in their communities, the Chiefs committed to working collaboratively to explore opportunities for a joint addictions' treatment facility within their traditional territories and providing wrap around services within their communities.

The Chiefs continued the discussion in a meeting with Yukon Premier Ranj Pillai, and Yukon's Member of Parliament Dr. Brendan Hanley on May 20, underscoring the need for a whole of government approach to collectively work through the substance use crisis to a future of healthy and progressive communities and people.

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Photo 1: Chiefs of Northern Nations meet along the Porcupine River in Old Crow, Yukon. From left to right: Grand Chief Ken Kyikavichik of the Gwich'in Tribal Council, Chief Pauline Frost of Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation, Chief Dawna Hope of First Nation of Na-Cho Nyäk Dun and Chief Roberta Joseph Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in First Nation. *Photo by Atsushi Sugimoto, Arctic Media Creation.*



Photo 2: Yukon Leaders meet along the Porcupine River in Old Crow, Yukon. From left to right: Yukon Premier Ranj Pillai, Grand Chief Ken Kyikavichik of the Gwich'in Tribal Council, Chief Pauline Frost of Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation, Chief Dawna Hope of First Nation of Na-Cho Nyäk Dun, Chief Roberta Joseph Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in First Nation and Member of Parliament for Yukon, Dr. Brendan Hanley. *Photo by Atsushi Sugimoto, Arctic Media Creation.*