

First Nation Governance: Building on Experience
Opening Remarks by Premier Fentie

February 9, 2010
Whitehorse Westmark

Check against delivery

Good morning Elders, Chiefs, and Ladies and Gentlemen. I am pleased to be here this morning to welcome you to this event. I would like to acknowledge the Ta'an Kwäch'än Council and the Kwanlin Dün First Nation, on whose traditional territory this event is being held.

Thank you to Councillor Dawson for opening today with the prayer and thanks to both Councillor Dawson and Chief Sam for welcoming us. I would also like to take this opportunity to acknowledge our partnership with Indian and Northern Affairs Canada for co-sponsoring this conference with the Yukon Government.

Building on last year's success, this is the second conference that INAC and the Government of Yukon have partnered on to provide a forum for sharing knowledge and best practices related to First Nation governance.

I want to say "modern" First Nation governance as I appreciate the fact that Yukon First Nations governed themselves historically based on their traditional laws and customs flowing from their respective cultural values.

I recently had the opportunity to view "*Setting Our Course: Yukon First Nation Self-Government*" and was reminded again of the vision held by those individuals who traveled to Ottawa many years ago to re-assert that right to self-government over citizens and lands.

There is an opportunity, with the tools available to us through the Agreements, for First Nations, and public government in Yukon to work together so that First Nations can occupy their authorities in the current social, economic and cultural milieu, while respecting those values that make them unique as a people.

Conferences such as these are essentially leading the way in developing that knowledge base to assist First Nations in fulfilling the spirit and intent of their modern day treaties and self-government agreements.

This is ground-breaking work. What is being created in Yukon is unique in Canada and probably the world.

Over the next few days, you will hear about two of these projects. *The First Nation Governance and Public Administration Pilot Initiative*, which includes the Champagne and Aishihik First Nations. The second is the *Capacity Development within Yukon First Nation Land and Resource Departments Project*, which is a partnership between the Governance

Liaison and Capacity Development Branch, Kwanlin Dün First Nation, Vuntut Gwitchin Government and Carcross/Tagish First Nation.

By supporting First Nation governance, we are investing in vibrant partnerships and promoting collaboration among all orders of government in a modern-day Yukon.

As we learn relevant and useful examples of governance in action, our ability to work more productively increases and we gain efficiencies which benefit all Yukoners. Capacity development also increases dramatically, the opportunity to continue to build strong, healthy communities and adaptable, vigorous economies.

Over the next three days, you will meet with other senior officials from all orders of government – Yukon and Northern BC First Nation governments, Yukon government and Government of Canada.

There are many success stories to share and conferences like this one helps us build on our successes together.

You will hear about a number of successful Northern Strategy projects. The Self-Government Secretariat will provide an overview on the new Self-Government Resource Centre and website. CYFN will be available to discuss the Yukon First Nations Public Service Initiative, which they are leading.

The Conference Board of Canada is also here to describe the mandate, research agenda and approach of the recently launched Centre for the North. The main purpose of the centre is to work with First Nations leaders, businesses, governments, communities, educational institutions and other organizations to achieve a shared vision of sustainable prosperity in the North.

In many ways Yukon is the jurisdiction that governments around the world look to for guidance in creating a structure for self-government. With conferences like this one, we are facilitating the transfer of knowledge and ensuring we work together to make progress happen.

I encourage you to enjoy many productive and thought-provoking discussions over the next three days, and I look forward to hearing about the great things that will come from bringing so many minds together from across the territory and Northern BC, all with the shared goal of moving forward.

Thank you.