

**THE HONOURABLE CAROLINE COCHRANE
MINISTER OF EXECUTIVE AND
INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS**

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Inuvialuit Day and National Indigenous Peoples Day

Mr. Speaker, I know that renewing our government's relationship with Indigenous governments is important to all Members. That is why the 19th Legislative Assembly has established settling and implementing treaty, land, resources and self-government agreements as one of its priorities. We have also made it a priority to implement the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People.

On June 5th each year, we commemorate Inuvialuit Day to celebrate the signing of the Inuvialuit Final Agreement in 1984.

In many ways, this agreement led the way for the future negotiation of land, resources and self-government agreements in the Northwest Territories and, perhaps, all of Canada. The Inuvialuit Final Agreement was the first comprehensive land claim agreement north of the 60th parallel and only the second of its kind in Canada.

The Final Agreement designates over 90,000 square kilometres of land as the Inuvialuit Settlement Region and includes close to 13,000 square kilometres of subsurface ownership and certain wildlife harvesting rights within the region. The agreement also established the Inuvialuit Development Corporation to support Inuvialuit self-reliance by providing a solid economic base that allows them to participate fully in the Canadian economy.

Just as importantly, the Final Agreement gave Inuvialuit a guaranteed right to participate in important decisions affecting the Inuvialuit Settlement Region: it established the Inuvialuit Game Council, ensured Inuvialuit participation on co-management boards, and led to the creation of the Inuvialuit Regional Corporation.

To this day, the Inuvialuit Regional Corporation remains one of this government's most important and valued partners. The Inuvialuit Regional Corporation was the first

Indigenous government to join with our government in signing on to the Devolution Agreement-in-Principle in January 2011, and their support and participation in the negotiation of the final agreement was invaluable to our government. The Inuvialuit Regional Corporation continues to be a strong supporter and ally as a member of the Intergovernmental Council on Lands and Resource Management.

Following Devolution, the Inuvialuit Regional Corporation and our government jointly advocated to Canada for a start to Arctic offshore oil and gas accord negotiations, as called for in the Devolution Agreement. These negotiations began in the spring of 2019, and the GNWT and the Inuvialuit Regional Corporation share an interest in bringing more decision-making authority to the North as part of the accord.

Earlier this year we celebrated Gwich'in Day. Later this summer, we celebrate two additional important landmarks for the people of the Northwest Territories. Sahtu Day on June 23rd will mark the 27th anniversary of the signing of the Sahtu Dene and Metis Comprehensive Land Claim Agreement, and August 4th will mark the 15th anniversary of the signing of the Tłıchǫ Agreement. We look forward to recognizing these accomplishments with our Indigenous government partners, and continuing to build on the vision of reconciliation expressed in these agreements.

On June 21st, we will also celebrate National Indigenous People's Day. This is a day to celebrate the first peoples of Canada, including the rich and diverse cultures of the Dene, Inuit and Métis peoples.

National Indigenous People's Day also serves as a reminder that we are stronger, and more successful, when our public government works in collaboration with Indigenous governments throughout the Northwest Territories.

Mr. Speaker, our collaboration with the Inuvialuit, the Sahtu Secretariat Incorporated and the Tłıchǫ are just three examples of the government-to-government relationships we are building with all Indigenous governments of the Northwest Territories. We look forward to continuing to build and strengthen these particularly important relationships.

The future of the Northwest Territories depends on partnerships. One of the things that the COVID-19 pandemic has demonstrated is that we are all connected. Everybody has been affected by the pandemic, and all governments have had to work hard together to help protect the health of Northwest Territories residents.

Indigenous governments are a critical partner for us and that is why our government has been meeting weekly with them throughout the pandemic to discuss our response and how we can work together to serve our people. While this pandemic will not last, I look forward to continued close collaboration between the Government of the Northwest Territories and Indigenous governments in the years to come.

We ask all Members to join me in congratulating the Inuvialuit people on the 36th anniversary of the Inuvialuit Final Agreement.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.