

Delà Got'jine Self-Government Negotiations UPDATE



Self-government workshop in Colville Lake



Four Elders and between 15 and 30 people participated in the workshop at different times.

- A community workshop in Colville Lake from July 9 to 11.
- It was the same week as the Ayni Keh Land Corporation AGM, which allowed members from other communities to participate.
- The workshop was facilitated by a new member of the negotiation team, Roxane Poulin. Her role is to help with workshops and communications.

What we talked about

Participants got an overview and update on the negotiations. The main topics discussed were:

- General self-government question and concerns
- Why we want self-government and what we expect self-government to change or make better in our community and for our people
- How the self-government agreement will work with the Treaty and other laws and agreements
- The structure of the new Delà Got'jine Government
- The process for electing the new Delà Got'jine Government
- Some parts of the Delà Got'jine Constitution
 - Key words in our language
 - History and identity of our people
 - Our vision for the future

The Delà Got'jine Self-Government Negotiations team works for the members of the Behd'ziahda First Nation and the Ayni Keh Land Corporation. We publish regular updates on the negotiations and related activities to make sure our members know what is happening and can see how their feedback is being used.

We welcome your questions and feedback at any time.

Have questions or comments?

Stop by the BAFN office or contact David Codzi
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What people told us

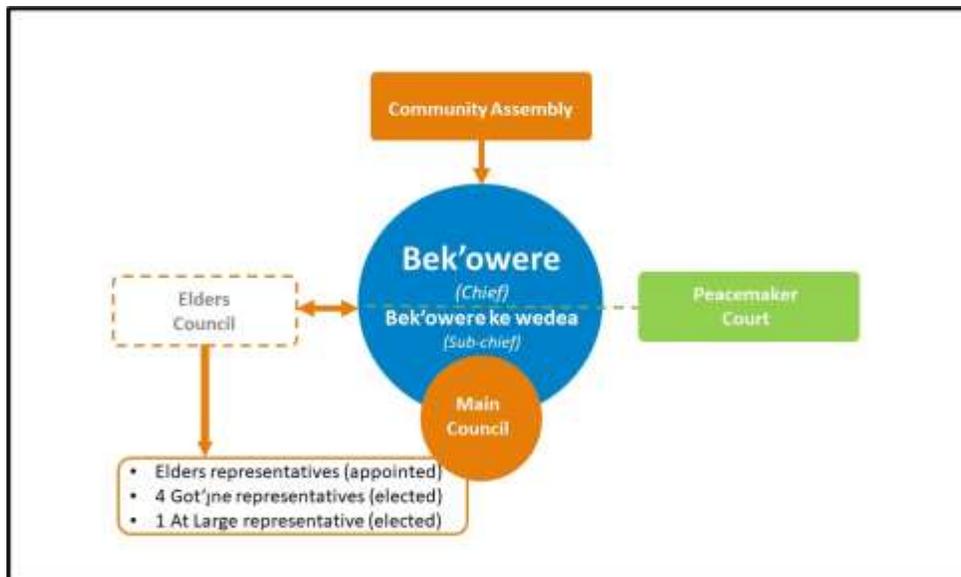
About self-government

- There was support and hope for self-government.
- Self-government will allow us to be more independent, set our own priorities, make our own decisions and govern ourselves according to our culture and traditions.
- People want more control and influence on the land and a focus on preserving our culture, language and traditions.
- People want self-government to give the community more control over housing, justice and local needs.
- There is some concern that Colville Lake does not have the capacity right now to take on all the roles and responsibilities that will come with self-government. This means we need to focus on education and capacity development now to be ready for self-government.



Photo by: Brendan Codzi

About the structure of the Delà Got'jne Government



The proposed governance model was presented and explained in detail.

- People said liked this model in general.
- People liked the idea of the Peacemaker Court, especially if it can deal with minor offenses locally, especially for youth.
- They asked to add more youth representation in the government.
- They also wanted the governance model to ensure citizens who do not live in Colville Lake are still represented and involved in the government.

What people told us

About the election process

The last election was a test run for going back to a Delà Got'ine culture-based way of doing the elections. The negotiation team was looking for feedback on what people liked about this way of doing elections and what could be improved in the future.

- People said they were confused about the rules and process for the last election.
- They support the idea of using the four family groupings (Got'ines) but they do not agree with people being moved from one list to another to make the got'ines even. This is something we did to meet Canada's requirements, but it does not respect the cultural reason for using the got'ine in the first place. It can also lead to conflict and confusion. There was strong and unanimous support for leaving the got'ines the way they are even if that means they are all different sizes.
- People generally liked the way of nominating and electing the chief, sub-chief and at-large councillor. They did not have any strong objections to the way got'ine representatives were nominated and voted on (Each Got'ine chooses their nominee. If a Got'ine has more than one nominee, it goes to a vote by all voters. Voters get one vote for each got'ine.)
- People were not sure they like the idea of single candidates being acclaimed. People wondered if there should still be a requirement to "approve" these candidates on the ballot. This would require a process for what happens if someone is not approved.
- People would like to see longer timelines and notice periods for future elections, especially for people who do not live in Colville Lake.
- People emphasized that the Chief Returning Officer is a very important position. This person must be very well-informed on the process and able to answer questions and make decisions about the process confidently and consistently.

Time to start developing the Delà Got'ine Constitution

The Delà Got'ine Government will need a constitution. This will be the highest law of the Delà Got'ine Government. It will describe how the government is structured and the rules it must follow. The constitution will be developed and approved by the members of the Behdzi Ahda First Nation and the Ayoni Keh Land Corporation only. The other governments are not involved.

Talking about the Delà Got'jne Constitution

History and identity

Participants gave their ideas for what should go in the part of the constitution called “preamble” that describes the history, identity and vision of the Delà Got'jne.

Some key points were:

- Our history goes way back, way before any government.
- Our ancestors had to walk long distances to survive. They went as far as the barren lands. They were strong and never gave up.
- The trails our ancestors used for centuries are still used by our people today, for example at Aubrey Lake.
- A long time ago we were all one people in this area, then there was a great war (Ayoni Keh).
- Our language is important and unique. We must keep our language and use our language. We must keep our way of life and the lessons our ancestors taught us.
- There are four mountains in our area that are like four brothers who watch over each other: Ayoni, Bisaiyou, Yamoga and one other.



Photo by: Brendan Codzi

Listening to the Elders

Important things Elders teach us:

- Don't challenge Elders; listen to them and try and understand
- It takes time to understand Elders. They use few words but they mean a lot.
- The land is very important to us. You will find everything you need out on the land. Everything you need to survive and everything you need to learn for your life.
- We have to be careful about sharing our stories. We have to protect our ideas and our knowledge.
- Knowledge is important, not just money.

THE STORY OF *AYONI KEH*

A long time ago we were all one people in this area, then there was a great war (Ayoni Keh). One child shot an owl with diamond shaped feathers. It was a special owl. Another child took a feather to his parents and said he had killed the owl. The parents of the two children fought over this and it grew into a full-blown war that turned the lake on top of Ayoni Mountain to blood. The few who survived split into different tribes and went different ways. The Elders stayed behind and became the Kasho Got'jne. The people of Colville Lake are descendent of these old, wise ones. They were good at everything and had medicine. Others tried to kill them, but their medicine was strong and protected them. Other tribes always feared the Kasho Got'jne. We were all one people, but after Ayoni Key the language we spoke changed as the people dispersed.

Delà Got'jne Constitution: Vision

Participants were given a plain language version of the draft language that could be included to explain the Delà Got'jne vision for self-government in 10 points.

People generally liked the ten points and suggested only a few changes.

1. To have a self-sufficient government based on teachings from our Elders and the land that emphasize independence and determination
2. To be self-reliant and innovative so we can be more responsible while we live in harmony with our lands.
3. To have a strong and prosperous government that pursues sustainable economic development and give its people the tools to be successful physically, mentally, emotionally and spiritually
4. To have an accountable government where Tseduweh have the responsibility to speak and the leadership has the responsibility to listen when making decisions
5. Delá Got'jne Government decision making authorities and practices will always be rooted in our culture and will also bring in elements of Canadian democracy when it is appropriate or needed
6. Delá Got'jne Government follows our traditional laws and will try to keep responsibility for its operations in the hands of Delá Got'jne K'e so that the Delá Got'jne remain strong, hard working, capable and reliable
7. We will respect the spirit and intent of Treaty 11 between Delá Got'jne and the Crown
8. We have inherent rights of self-government, including the rights to determine Delá Got'jne political, cultural and economic institutions, and to determine our relationships with other peoples and their governments
9. We have concluded this Self-Government Agreement in order to secure the place of Delá Got'jne K'e as a distinct, self-governing people within Canada and the world.
10. We will continue to try and achieve more authorities and jurisdictions over time.

In our language

The Constitution will use dene words. During the workshop we reviewed the words and definitions that are proposed for the constitution. People generally agreed with them and suggested some changes. These suggestions will help make the next draft of the constitution better.

What the negotiation team is doing with the information it got from the workshop

1. Briefing Canada and the GNWT on what we heard at the Governance workshop.
2. Developing options for youth representation in the government.
3. Developing options for how to ensure non-residents are represented and involved in the government.
4. Looking at how to make improvements to the election process based on feedback.
5. Telling Canada how we want to use the four got'ines for elections.
6. Working on a full draft constitution to present to the community at a future workshop.
7. Working on increasing communication with members about the negotiations.

Values and principles of the Delá Got'ine

Over the three days of workshops, participants also described the key values and principles that define the Delá Got'ine. Here is what we learned from this.



- **We are one people.**
- **We are proud.**
- **We are kind to each other.**
- **We never give up. We face our problems and find a way to deal with them.**
- **We are independent. We must know how to survive and take care of ourselves.**
- **Stories are important to us. We must learn them and share them.**
- **We live like our forefathers did. We resolve things the way they did, by sitting down together and talking about them.**
- **We value and live by the teachings of our ancestors.**
- **We pray.**
- **We have a deep connection to the land. It is what makes us strong.**
- **We are people who have hunted, trapped and netted for generations. These skills should be respected and maintained.**
- **We respect and protect all animals and fish.**
- **All our equipment needs to be well looked after (nets, traps, even the sticks we use).**