

Making Modern Treaties Work – LCAC
Breakout 2A: Involving Youth, Recruitment and Succession Planning

Moderator: Bobby Clark, Director of Communications and Inter-Governmental Relations, Nisga'a Lisims Government

PANELIST 1: Jordan Peterson, Deputy Grand Chief / Vice President, Gwich'in Tribal Council:

- I'm going to speak to what the Gwich'in Tribal Council has been doing for the past 5 - 10 years with our youth and building the next generation of leaders.
- The first thing I want you to do is to look around. Ask single person who is not here why they weren't. If it is all about our youth, this room should be packed. If we don't discuss how we can support our young people for roles in our government, or even to have basic life skills after high school, I don't think we're doing our job that was envisioned by our elders, by people who did all the work to ensure these land claims will make life better for future generations.
- I was elected at 29. Leading up to that I had lived in Alberta, Yukon and worked in Fort St. John in an industry I didn't necessarily believe in. But sometimes, with the lack of education that I'd had, those were the only options. We are here to talk about the other options for young people and how they can be included in our governments.
- Growing up, I was surrounded by strong elders. I had a grandfather who was involved in the land claims process, but more importantly, who took his grandkids out on the land. Unfortunately, this only happened when he was sober. I was also very fortunate; when he was sober, he did all he could to take us out in the bush. I feel a responsibility.
- We have a term, 'proud to be Gwich'in'. I had never thought about what that answer was for me until I moved home in 2017 from Edmonton. In 2013, I had been invited as a youth who had left the community to a conference held by the Gwich'in on Self-Governance. Going home instilled a feeling of belonging that I was missing down south. After the conference, I called every week, saying that I wanted to come home and work for the Gwich'in Tribal Council. They asked me to write a 2,000-word essay on what I would do and why. After I submitted it, they asked me when I could start.
- I'm trying to instill the message of going after what you want. When I returned home, I had a weeklong session with elders. One elder asked me: what does it mean to be proud to be Gwich'in? That question has stuck with me and I try to answer it every day. It evolves. Culture is not stagnant; we adapt to survive and thrive. I couldn't answer. But by the end of the week, after going out on the land, learning about my language, my family history, my family tree, I had given her a response. I won't get into my response. If you're not Indigenous, if you don't understand your European ancestry or where you come from, you're not going to know where you're going. This is the mindset we try to instill in our young people. Keep asking yourself that question. The answer will evolve.
- In my essay, the first thing I wanted to establish was a regional youth council. Two representatives from each community would meet once a month and decide

- what they want to do, and present this at the Annual General Assembly. I wanted to provide every opportunity for youth to be involved, to go to school. The reason I went home was not just to work with young people, but for them to use their voice in a way that is listened to. We try to instill a framework for projects, but the youth decide what happens.
- Conferences have been held surrounding self-determination and Aboriginal citizenship. Academics are brought in and youth need to apply to attend. The whole point is to instill the life skills that our students are leaving high school without. Youth identify specific programs or faculties they want to visit. At our first academic conference, we had a girl who had started a bakery in the community shadow another bakery and learn the business side. She went off to school and has done really well. Her twin sister just finished her teaching degree while having a kid. Every year we try to calculate how many kids pursue post-secondary after coming to the conference. It is over 80%.
 - CIRNAC pays for all of it. It's been so successful that we have some of these people moving back home. This is the recruitment piece, building succession.
 - We want members in our government that are well educated. We have a government internship program that intakes three Gwich'in a year. 1st year with tribal council, 2nd year with Canada and 3rd year This is to have people see how different governments work.
 - The focus on creating opportunities cannot be built by those within political roles. They need to be run by youth for youth. We can instill aspects of how we educate young people on our treaties, but it's more important to understand that young people will see through the bullshit that we sometimes try to provide them.
 - "The most creative way to gaining young people's support is just to be honest with them". - Jordan Peterson
 - When the Indian brotherhood happened in the 60s and 80s all the young men and women were surrounded by their communities. You don't see that now. Take those values that we hold as Indigenous people and implement them, just as we want to implement our agreements. If we're not sticking to our backbones and doing it for future generations then what's the point?

PANELIST 2: Kaitlynn Hester-Moses, Youth Grand Chief, Cree Nation Youth Council:

- At the 1985 Grand Council of Crees, the Chiefs had concerns about our growing population. They decided to create the Cree Nation Youth Council.
- It is our job to deliver on the needs and take action in the youth concerns. We seek to promote, preserve and protect the Cree identity, culture and heritage, including the language, values, customs, traditions, philosophy, beliefs and system of law.
- Youth are at the top of the CNYC organizational structure. Without youth, there is no CNYC.
- In my role, I am a leader, advocate, spokesperson and youth representative. It is my duty to be the chairperson for meetings, to provide leadership and direction for youth, and to be a liaison for the Cree Nations in their relations with the government.

- The deputy steps in when I am unable to be present. We have an Administrative Technician, a Special Projects Officer, a Liaison Officer and a Board of Directors, which includes youth chiefs, youth coordinators, youth leaders and representatives. Finally, we have an Executive Committee made up of myself, the deputy, and three members appointment by the board.
- Everything we do is for the youth. They tell us what they want to see.
- We have 6 main categories: education, culture, health, business, social development and citizenship and participation. We also have funding opportunities. Youth can create proposals, which the CNYC board will review and submit.
- We regularly host regional events, conferences, assemblies, and training sessions for the youth in the Cree nations. Events are held by a host community. There are 10 communities in the Cree Nation.
- Over the past 3 years, some of our programming has included youth and Elders' gatherings, motivational night, post-secondary school essay challenge, canoe brigade, Cree Youth Day, Cree Regional Gaming Tournament, business symposiums, etc.
- We are collecting youth stories for a book, entitled 'Inspire Hope'. Right now, I'm touring, visiting youth and collecting feedback and concerns.
- We had a conference here at the hotel with 120 registrations to visit our post-secondary students and to inspire them to continue to their education so they can come back to work in our communities.

PANELIST 6: Jodi-Lyn Newnham, Director, Implementation and Reconciliation, Government of Yukon:

- We wanted to make sure there was an opportunity for the youth who participated in the treaty simulation that took place these past two days to talk about their experiences.
- Here we have Shakina and Melissa who participated this past week and in the Yukon in November.

PANELIST 4: Robin Bradasch, Director, Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs:

- Some background: The 3 of us all sit on an implementation body. We have struggled with how to get youth interested in implementation.
- We want to retire! No, I won't retire, but I would like to take a break every now and then.
- In the Yukon there is a document from 1973 called 'Together Today for our Children Tomorrow'. We were some of those children and now we have taken on that role. We negotiated an umbrella final agreement, with 11 Indigenous governments that sit with Canada.
- Self-government gives law-making powers. People thought we were done when we signed the agreements but the work is just beginning.
- We are negotiating every day and we saw a need for young people to consider negotiation as a career.

Jodi-Lyn Newnham:

- At the Yukon Treaty Negotiation and Implementation Simulation, youth were divided into teams and tasked with finding out how to implement different plans. Why engage youth?
 - o For the passing on of knowledge, for gaining real life experiences, to inspire thinking about future careers, and practical knowledge of the final self-government agreements.
- How the treaty simulation works:
 - o Youth receive a booklet and an assignment in a special management area and have experts working with them.
 - o On the second day, they conduct a negotiation and implementation simulation.
 - o They try to work through what their agreements state and how to best implement them.

Robin Bradash:

- People are thinking of how they can contribute to their communities.
- My Chief took a chance on me when I was 23 and asked me to come home.
- We will continue with the implementation simulation, and are looking for other ways to provide information to youth about ways to step into their community.

PANELIST 5: Shakina Johnson, Youth Rep, Kluane First Nation:

- I'm from Kluane First Nation. When I was young I hated the phrase 'youth are leaders of tomorrow'.
- I felt like they needed me to do it, so I said no, I'm not going to do anything. I'm going to be homeless. I was bribed to go to the treaty simulation. I saw that they don't need you, but they want you to be a leader.
- I hated the idea that I liked negotiation but I slowly accepted it.
- It was a cool hands-on experience and made me seriously consider being a negotiator in the future.

PANELIST 3: Kim Smarch, Director of Negotiations and Implementation, Teslin Tlingit Council:

- Growing up, I had elders all around me. That isn't the case today. A lot of our Elders are passing away.
- We have very few fluent speakers in our communities.
- Traditionally, Elders on the land spent a lot of time with their youth. This is where the transfer of knowledge and language happened. Today it's not happening. My recommendation is to have the simulations in the communities, as there are many First Nations who don't understand the treaties.

Robin Bradash:

- We've done the treaty simulation a couple of times. It has always been done in conjunction with an event, which works well as it brings together a dynamic group of people.

- At the forum in the Yukon I said that I wouldn't retire, but that I would take my place behind the youth and support them while they take us to the next goal and the next milestone. I think it's important that we include this in how we build up those that will come behind us. Eventually we will follow them.

Question:

1. How will we prepare our youth for some of the comments that I have heard at government tables like, "Indigenous people should be treated like immigrants"? It is important to allow our youth to experience the pain but to move into a place of productivity. How do you see the best fostering of that journey?

Robin Bradash:

- That fire from the time of the land claims was transferred to us. We didn't do it as well in my opinion because we saw the finish line.
- I think you're right we need to teach our children about the good and the bad. Reconciliation to me is about having the same story.

Melisa Mcgurk (Youth from Simulation)

- I think the history needs to be told. In the simulations, the peers will hold each other up and push through those boundaries.

Jordan Peterson:

- We have taken on the dependency of our government. The fight that our Elders had is now happening within our own communities. There are intergenerational effects of the residential school survivors, our generation is the first generation not to go. We have now taken on the dependency and are now administering these programs.
 - Not one government has drawn down a full jurisdiction. The Canadian Government asks us what our government is going to look like, and it shouldn't matter to them but it does.
 - Treaty simulations will teach how to deal with conflict. As an elected official, we will be berated with comments that are nonfactual and we cannot respond in the same way.
2. How will you make this program more accessible to youth? It can be a bit intimidating with words like implementation and negotiation.

Robin Bradash:

- Word of mouth has been helpful. The first time we did struggle to get people there, but we didn't struggle this time.

Kim Smarch:

- We hire summer students. Implementation is a hands-on thing you need to experience to learn.

Jordan Peterson:

- We created a Gwich'in curriculum that is being piloted in our high schools now. The challenge is to find the funding (hint hint GNWT) to help support the development of what we've already put in place.
3. I left my home territory to study here in Ottawa. It was hard for me to read political words. Why is it important for youth to step into that role? For me, I am the first one to graduate both high school and post-secondary school. I come from a community where we speak nothing but Inuktitut.

Jordan Peterson:

- There are other ways we can create opportunities for young males that have dropped out of high school. Traditionally our communities had traditional gender roles. Now men and women can do any role in our community. It's interesting that it is women in the roles of treaty implementation, because are the ones organizing our communities. Young men drop out of high school and want to spend time outside. There is a role for every young person. Whatever it is that you want to do, our nations have every right to do that.

Kaitlyn Hester-Moses:

- It's very important for our youth to be involved and to step in. They are not just youth, they are people, we are people. We have a right and we have a say. We have the visions the goals and dreams of what we want to achieve in our communities.

Kim Smarch:

- We are born with the responsibility to carry on.