

KASKA NATIONAL CONSTITUTION COMMUNITY CONSULTATIONS
May 7, 2007. Daylu Dena Council, Lower Post, BC

PRESENT: Hammond Dick, Kaska Tribal Chief; Walter Carlick, Daylu Dena Council; Liard Macmillan, Liard First Nation; Ann Maje Raider, Liard Aboriginal Women's Society; Mary Maje, Billie Maje, May Brodhagen, Violet Greenway, Alice Brodhagen, Lorna Reid, Hannah Ludecker, Dixon Lutz, Dennis Porter, Fanny Vance, Jeff , Lois Moorcroft

Hammond Dick invited Lorna Reid to give an opening prayer.

Walter Carlick, Deputy Chief of Liard First Nation and Chief of Daylu Dena Council welcomed the people present. These meetings are to talk about the changes we need to make. We need to get more people out to attend the community information sessions. Every Kaska person will have a vote on the Constitution.

Liard Macmillan: Welcome, and thanks for the invitation to come to Lower Post for this meeting. Echo comments from Deputy Chief Walter Carlick that the comments and advice from Kaska elders and citizens present today are invaluable to this project. Thanks to Liard Aboriginal Women's Society for organizing the community meetings.

Hammond Dick: The Kaska Tribal Council, Liard Aboriginal Women's Society, many Kaska leaders, citizens, and others have been working hard. This process has been ongoing for ten years. Lois will facilitate going through the document, it's pretty technical but we want to go through it with you. I'm hoping that by this summer we'll have a final document to be presented to the members this summer and ratify it. The Kaska National Constitution involves the future for our people, how we interrelate as Kaska communities. We want to put together a document that reflects who we are and how we govern ourselves. Once we put the constitution in place it's hard to amend. It will set out how our government operates, and what part you play as Kaska people wherever you live.

Ann Maje Raider: Thank you to Walter Carlick and Lower Post community. We came here last year, and are grateful to be back here. There's been a lot of work since the 1998 Fort Ware General Assembly resolution that came forward from the Elder to mandate our leadership to get together and write a constitution. The recent survey of Kaska citizens was helpful to get input from people who aren't able to attend meetings. The constitution is important because it brings checks and balances, and social order to people.

Reviewed the Power Point presentation and made comments throughout.

Preamble

Bullet 2: should say "approximately" (more than) 97,000 square miles. There are 2 or 3 more Kaska dialects. See James A. Teit, "Kaska Tales", 1917. . Pat Moore and Leda Jules are working on Kaska translation for names of dialects, place names, etc.

Kaska Dena National Assembly

It should say in the presentation that all Kaska are welcome to attend the national assembly.

There should be more than 25 citizens present to form a quorum.

It should be left open for more Kaska dialect groups to return to their regions. It doesn't show here that everybody's welcome to attend. This should be further clarified to say that all Kaska people could attend National Assemblies.

It's important to explain what quorum is, need to add some language. Quorum is the bare minimum number of people you have present in the room to proceed with the business of a national assembly, and it's set to ensure fairness and accountability. It's not meant to exclude anyone. 5 Chiefs can't get together and hold a national assembly. Pelly Banks is a recognized community in the current Kaska Board of Directors by-laws. Leadership need to get the information out to the people. It's not fair to anyone when they pick the same people to get funding to attend General Assemblies.

Kaska Dena National Council

Why are we having two men and two women's representatives? It's open to everyone to run. Why are we doing this? It's important to have this discussion.

Yes, it's important to have the discussion. In the old days women didn't have rights.

Women were discriminated against even in their own nation. Women who intermarried were no longer recognized as Kaska. It is important to have women in government and it's important to ask the Elders. I'm a woman and I've been discriminated against. It's important to mention women. Even the non-native people would say that.

There may have been discrimination in the past. Why can't we leave it open?

It's always good to have women in leadership roles. You have to see it with your own eyes to understand how important it is to have Kaska women represented in Kaska government. I'm thinking about our future generations.

The Constitution represents all of us.

Kaska are a matrilineal society. Colonial European societies are paternalistic societies.

Women are bring money to the table, bringing food, not only that. I haven't heard men leaders talking about women's issues. Do the men talk about breast health, violence against women? As leaders you know about what's happening to women in our communities. You know about the history of rapes, sexual assaults today in our communities, HIV/Aids infection. Do men talk about these issues, about herbal medicine, ancient teachings, midwives not around anymore, the continued teaching of our children? The women's representatives are there to address all the issues. Today is not like a long time ago. We had lots of different things we don't have now. Elders are talking about hard times coming. We need to allow women to come to the governance table, speak about different issues, be part of making decisions for the good of all Kaska.

Aren't we all Kaska, Wolf and Crow?

We have to think about today as well as the past. Some issues aren't spoken about, and we'll always have that. It looks like LAWS is influencing the constitution by putting in women's representatives.

No, this issue came up at the meetings and women insisted we put in the women's representatives. There's a shortage of grass roots people in leadership. The Constitution

is about the empowerment of people. KTC women's and men's representatives, Elders and Youth will have to find their own money to participate.

I was grateful to witness in going to Yellowknife the economy flourishing, native people are down and out. I asked about the discussions and negotiations and was told no women were involved in negotiating the socio-economic agreements. This is about balance; women bring to the table a balance, culture, language, and social issues. We need both men's and women's perspectives in leadership. Let's try it for two or three years, if it creates a huge set of problems we can change it.

I have an issue with this as well. It's important. We're talking about representation. When we form a government people are there to represent everyone. It's up to the government and the leadership to accommodate interests and fairly represent men and women on issues that are important to people.

Women are not represented and our issues, such as our children being recognized as Indian people, have not been dealt with. Women want to be involved because of our children and their needs. How can I call myself a Kaska woman when my grandchildren aren't recognized as Kaska? Yes, I believe it's important to give our women guaranteed seats at the National Council. We're not trying to take your power away. We're ...

I don't feel threatened as a man in any way by having Women's Representatives on the National Council. I don't think any man should feel threatened by this. I think it would bring a better balance. This Constitution has to go to ratification. People will have to vote yes or vote no.

The Constitution is supposed to be our law. Individualizing throws everything off balance. Then it's not a constitution.

Should the Kaska Dena National Council meet 4x a year?

Kaska Dena National Chief

"Nominated by at least 25 citizens living in Kaska communities." Shouldn't this be "from Kaska communities"?

A candidate for National Chief should get signatures from each Kaska community.

I like having one number, we're one people.

The standard should be higher than 25 signatures to run for national chief, we should require candidates to have at least 50 signatures. Perhaps a minimum of 5 signatures from each Kaska community.

"Must live in Kaska Dena Kayeh when elected." This should state the National Chief must live in the area surrounding where the Kaska national headquarters office is located.

Kaska Dena National Executive

How often should the National Executive meet?

As often as necessary.

As business arises, when requested by the National Chief.

Executive should meet more often than the full National Council.

Every 3 months, and the National Council every 4 months.

Budget constraints are a reality, how are we going to fund our national government.

We've always recognized the budget constraints, will need people who can hustle and get funding for the Elders Council, Youth Council, etc. Motivated people can get the money.

National Elders' Council

Why 4 Elders from each community?

You know Elders, one day they're sick, or in hospital, the next day they're fine, they put 4 in there to have back-up.

We should form our Elders Councils in each community; that's what we need, it's important. It doesn't take much money to hold one meeting and get them together. It's about time we did that. Everybody is always talking about the elders. They have lots to learn and they have a lot to give. Elders have a lot to offer. I would like to start an Elders Council, get some vocal people involved.

One Wolf and one Crow, can this be imposed?

Yes, we can do what we want to, it's our constitution.

It should refer to our language. Mesga Dena is Crow; Tsyone Dena is Wolf. It's more powerful to say it in Kaska.

Elders say we don't do well because we don't follow our traditional rules. We need to hold separate Mesga Dena and Tsyone Dena meetings; the Elders say that people are related when they meet with their own clan members and get the work done and there's no flirting. Sometimes you have to bring both clans together.

Wolf and Crow is how we used to work; that's our culture.

May is Mesga Dena, one of my family, so I don't have to bring her a gift, she's my older relative and I can ask her to do things, if I want to ask Grandma Alice about something, she's Tsyone Dena, I would bring her a gift.

Kaska Dena National Youth Council

It says members of the Youth Council must live in Kaska Dena Kayeh. Can people going to school in Whitehorse serve on the Youth Council? What do you think about that? If students do not lose residency when they attend school, and they can participate in the meetings, they should be able to be on the Youth Council. If there are geographically distant it's not practical for them to belong to the National Council.

I think the election rules should explain residency, could you use the term 'ordinarily reside' to say leaders shall live in Kaska Dena Kayeh.

General Discussion on National government bodies

Does the Constitution require that leaders must be substance free? I think this should be addressed.

It should be up to the people to make informed choices about who they select as leaders.

LM: The Constitution speaks to how local community governments relate with the National Council and the National Executive. I'm not sure if we're capturing everything. The National Constitution doesn't speak at all to the roles and responsibilities of the Kaska Dena Council, and how it relates to other Kaska government bodies. We don't

recognize the provincial and territorial borders, yet the Kaska Dena Council operates in BC and their work on resource agreements affects Yukon Kaska people.

HD: No, we don't recognize the borders, but in order to get representation to sit down with government we're forced to. Kaska Dena Council was formed to take part in the BC Treaty Process. It was organized by BC communities to have negotiations on treaties. Liard First Nation and Ross River Dena Council represent themselves. The Kaska Dena Council works with each northern BC community: Kwadacha/Fort Ward, Good Hope Lake, Fireside, Muncho, and Lower Post.

Constitutional Ratification

Will Kaska governments use new technologies to get more people involved in government processes? Mary told a story about her grandmother threatening with her cane to break up a fight on TV, and her reaction to television.

WC: I get a sense that the people working closely on the Constitution want it to get ahead quickly. We keep hearing it's been 10 years. Can you post the dates of when the Working Group plans to present the Constitution for ratification?

AMR: The Constitution will be presented to the Kaska National Assembly at Blue River on July 17, 18 and 19 in Blue River. We would like to bring the Constitution to a Special National Assembly at Frances Lake in late August or September this year. We may not make that deadline, but it's a target date.

HD: There should be more choices than by secret ballot for ratifying it. Why not a show of hands at a Special National Assembly?

MB: My own opinion is that it should be by secret ballot. This is our law and really important. A show of hands is too easy, and people could be intimidated. I don't think it should happen that way.

When there's a secret ballot the results are in writing.

WC: For the Yukon Umbrella Final Agreement ratification the negotiators became part of the ratification process, I disagreed with that. To get really honest answers from our people we need to have a separate ratification committee not tied to the document. Not people who have been working closely with it for 10 years. We need to have a big celebration if we do ratify the Constitution.

A hand game and drum dance.

I sat in quite a few meetings and we've heard from the Elders about putting this Constitution together.

A Ratification Committee should have non-Kaska people on it, and a Kaska man, woman, youth and elder.

Closing Prayer given by Chief Walter Carlick, who read it from an early Daylu Dena Council newsletter.