

# Arctic Athabaskan Council

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Arctic Council  
Senior Arctic Officials Meeting  
4-5 May, 2004  
Selfoss, Iceland

Good afternoon Senior Arctic Officials , ladies and gentlemen.

My name is Keith Maguire, Policy Analyst for the AAC and also with me today is Dr. Chris Paci, AAC Advisor. Let me take a moment to relay greetings from our new International Chair Gary Harrison from Chikaloon Traditional Village Council and our International Vice Chair Noeline Villebrun who is also the Dene National Chief.

I am very pleased to be here and present the overview of the Arctic Athabaskan Council and our work

The music you are listening to is the Deh Cho Drummers from Denendeh

Also Chris is passing out dried caribou for you from the Weyallon family of Rae , it is but a small taste of one of our traditional foods.

As well he is passing out an AAC backgrounder for your information.

Part 1  
AAC  
Overview

The first part of this presentation provides a brief overview of the AAC member organizations and tribal governments and their mandate under the treaty of the Arctic Athabaskan Council.

# Arctic Athabaskan Council

## AAC Member Communities

- 60 First Nation & Tribal Communities
  - Alaska
  - Yukon Territory
  - Northern British Columbia
  - Northwest Territories

Arctic Athabaskan Council (AAC) is an international organization established to represent the interests of Athabaskan peoples residing in Arctic North America - primarily in Alaska and Canada. The objectives of the AAC are to foster a greater understanding of the common heritage of all Athabaskan peoples and to represent Athabaskan peoples through permanent participant status of the Arctic Council.

In total, the AAC represents approximately 60 Indigenous communities, with a population of 35,000 people.

# Arctic Athabaskan Council

## AAC Member Communities

This is a map of the Traditional Territories of the AAC members. Athabaskan peoples, living in Arctic and Sub-Arctic Alaska and Canada have traditionally occupied a vast geographic area of approximately 3 million square miles.

This region has been continuously occupied by the Athabaskan peoples for at least 10,000 years, perhaps longer. This region also includes three of North America's largest river systems - the Yukon, Mackenzie and Churchill Rivers. It also includes vast areas of both tundra and boreal forests as well as North America's highest mountains - Mount McKinley and Mount Logan, and the world's largest non-polar ice-fields.

# Arctic Athabaskan Council

## Athabaskan History & Culture

- Semi-Nomadic hunters
- Traditional Food
- 12 Languages

The ancestors of present day Athabaskan peoples were semi-nomadic hunters. Traditional foods include caribou, moose, rabbits, gophers, ptarmigan, fish, berries and roots. Today, Athabaskan peoples are still primarily meat-eaters.

Athabaskan peoples developed a large trading network that continues to this day. This trade network allowed for in-out migration from for example the coast inland and vice versa. Many marriages and friendships developed as a result of these trade networks. This allowed for the extensive migration of the Athabaskan peoples.

Arctic Athabaskan peoples have a culture rich in distinct languages including 12 Aboriginal languages, including 23 dialects.

# Arctic Athabaskan Council

## Treaty of the AAC

### Key Elements

- Membership
  - *“indigenous governments representing constituencies with a majority of peoples of Athabaskan descent”*

On June 26, 2000, representatives from Alaskan Tribal Governments and Canadian First Nations and Metis gathered in Burwash Landing, Yukon to sign the Treaty of the Arctic Athabaskan Council - our founding constitution.

# Arctic Athabaskan Council

## Treaty of the AAC

### Key Elements

- Objective
  - *“foster a greater understanding of the common heritage of all Athabaskan peoples of Arctic North America”*

These next two slides summarize the primary purpose of AAC as an international indigenous organization. Our first objective is to foster a greater understanding of the common heritage of all Athabaskan peoples of Arctic North America. We strive to do this through our annual gatherings, our common goals and working together on a local level, nationally and internationally.

# Arctic Athabaskan Council

## Treaty of the AAC

### Key Elements

- Objective
  - *“represent Athabaskan peoples of Arctic North America in the Arctic Council”*

Our second objective is to be a part of the Arctic Council and to work cooperatively with member countries and permanent participants, to protect the unique cultural and social communities that exist in the north while keeping in mind sustainable development practices and the delicate balance of the two.

# Arctic Athabaskan Council

## History of Athabaskan Cooperation

**2000**

- **Arctic Athabaskan Council (AAC)** admitted as the fifth permanent participant

AAC became a Permanent Participant to the Arctic Council at the Arctic Council's second Ministerial meeting in Barrow, Alaska, October 10-13, 2000, and at the same time became a member of the Indigenous Peoples Secretariat, based in Copenhagen, Denmark

# Arctic Athabaskan Council

## History of Athabaskan Cooperation

Bill Erasmus  
Founding Member,  
Arctic Athabaskan Council

On the political need  
for the Arctic  
Athabaskan  
Council...

Bill Erasmus is a founding member of the Arctic Athabaskan Council. He talks briefly on the need for AAC.

Part 2

**Arctic Athabaskan Council  
"Our Work"**

This next section is about the the past and current activities of the AAC.

# Arctic Athabaskan Council

## AAC and the Arctic Council

### AAC representation

- Sustainable Development Working Group
  - Arctic Human Development Report

AAC is actively engaged in the sustainable development working group. Presently we are assisting in the coordination of the next SDWG to be held in Whitehorse, Yukon, Canada. Our former International Chair Ed Schultz was key in making this happen. We also applaud the SDWG for holding a meeting in Canada's north as well as Mr. Bernard Funston, Executive Secretary. AAC is also involved with the Arctic Human Development Report and is co-leading chapter 10 - education in the Arctic.

# Arctic Athabaskan Council

## AAC and the Arctic Council

### AAC representation:

#### – University of the Arctic

- Co-sponsored first Indigenous intern
- Indigenous Issues Committee

Arctic Athabaskan Council is also an active member of the University of the Arctic. We've been involved since 2000. We believe in the importance of education, and especially higher education. We co-sponsored the first Indigenous intern at the UArctic's coordination office in Rovaniemi, Finland in 2001. AAC also developed and chairs the UArctic's Indigenous Issues Committee. This committee was formed for the purpose of including and coordinating circumpolar Indigenous peoples input into the UArctic.

# Arctic Athabaskan Council

## AAC and the Arctic Council

### AAC representation

#### - AMAP & CAFF

- ACIA
- 2006 Petroleum Hydrocarbon Assessment

AAC participate in the Arctic Climate Impact Assessment. We are a member of the ACIA Steering Committee and have assisted with the chapters as well as the drafting of the policy document.

Currently AAC is interested in the 2006 Hydrocarbon Assessment, and in particular, chapter three - the socio-economic Consequences of oil and gas activities in the Arctic.

# Arctic Athabaskan Council

## AAC Focus Areas

Gary Harrison  
International Chair,  
Arctic Athabaskan Council

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On the AAC's  
environmental  
concerns

Gary Harrison was elected as AAC's new Internatinoal Chair in March of this year. Here he speaks about the formation of the AAC and the environment.

# Arctic Athabaskan Council

## AAC Focus Areas

- Promoting sustainable use of renewable resources
- supporting traditional lifestyles
- Climate change environmental, human health, social, cultural & economic impacts

Our current priorities are to promote sustainable resource management within our traditional territories and better understand the impacts of climate change on our ecosystems and peoples.

# Arctic Athabaskan Council

## AAC Focus Areas

Ed Schultz  
Grand Chief, Council of  
Yukon First Nations

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On the Arctic States'  
need for indigenous  
traditional knowledge

Ed Schultz is also a founding member of the Arctic Athabaskan Council and former International Chair. Ed has participated in Arctic environmental issues since the early 1990s.

# Arctic Athabaskan Council

## AAC International Cooperation

Gary Harrison  
International Chair,  
Arctic Athabaskan Council

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Discussing the need  
for indigenous  
cooperation

Our leaders, such as Gary Harrison, recognize the importance of cooperating internationally, not just through the Arctic Council, but generally speaking in all facets of international indigenous cooperation.

# Arctic Athabaskan Council

## AAC International Cooperation

- Arctic Council
  - Working Groups
- United Nations
  - UNFCCC
  - CBD
  - Permanent Forum

Currently, we are pursuing international cooperation with indigenous partners across the circumpolar north as well as with the United Nations forum for Indigenous peoples and the Un Framework on Climate Change as well as the Convention on Biological Diversity in relation to traditional knowledge.

# Arctic Athabaskan Council

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Thank you!  
Mussi Cho!

This concludes the presentation of the Arctic Athabaskan Council. Thank you.