



NEWS RELEASE

March 30, 2021 – Inuvik, NT

GRAND CHIEF KEN KYIKAVICHIK RECLAIMS HIS TRADITIONAL GWICH'IN LAST NAME

On Friday, March 26th at the Gwich'in Special Assembly in Inuvik, Gwich'in Tribal Council (GTC) Grand Chief Ken Smith announced that he has completed a process to reclaim his traditional Gwich'in last name of Kyikavichik.

Commonly known in the Gwich'in Region as 'Kay', the Kyikavichik last name was changed to 'Kay' or 'Kaye' in the early 20th century as initial settlers and government officials to the area could not pronounce the last name of Kyikavichik ('Kee-kah-vee-chik') which means 'carry the arrow' in the Gwich'in language.

Grand Chief Ken Kyikavichik stated that we pay honour to the Gwich'in language by taking "the effort to learn the pronunciations, understanding the meaning behind it, that's why I'm changing my last name". Grand Chief Kyikavichik added that it is "for us as Gwich'in to reclaim who we are as a people and we start that by changing the way in which we talk about it".

In late July of 2021, there will be commemorations around the centennial of the signing of Treaty 11 in the Gwich'in communities of Tsiigehtchic and Fort McPherson (Teetl'it Zheh). Grand Chief Kyikavichik noted that "it will fill me with tremendous pride this summer...that the great-grandson of Chief Johnny Kyikavichik Sr. will be participating as a Grand Chief of the Gwich'in Nation one hundred years after the signing of Treaty 11". Chief Johnny Kyikavichik Sr. was one of the signatories of Treaty 11 as a headman along with other Gwich'in leadership which included Teetl'it Chief Julius Salu, Gwichya Chief Paul Niditchie and other Teetl'it headmen such as Abraham Francis and Andrew Kunnizzi.

As a descendant of residential school survivors, the legal change of name fee for GTC Grand Chief Ken Kyikavichik was waived by NWT Vital Statistics and performed free of charge and was completed within a week in early March.

For media inquiries please contact:

Amber Keegan, Policy, Negotiations, & Communications Specialist
Gwich'in Tribal Council
amber.keegan@gwichintribal.ca
(867) 777-7923