

News Release

For immediate release

The Athabasca Denesų́liné, Ghotelnene K'odtįneh Dene, and the governments of Nunavut, the Northwest Territories, and Canada reach important ratification stage for land claim agreements

November 29, 2024 — Ottawa, Ontario — The Athabasca Denesų́liné, Ghotelnene K'odtįneh Dene, the Government of Nunavut, the Government of the Northwest Territories, and Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada

The Athabasca Denesų́liné (AD) and Ghotelnene K'odtįneh Dene (GKD), along with the governments of Nunavut, the Northwest Territories, and Canada are marking an important step toward renewing their Nation-to-Nation relationships. All parties have initialled the respective land claim agreements—the Athabasca Denesų́liné Agreement and the Ghotelnene K'odtįneh Dene Agreement—showing progress in implementing the AD and GKD's visions of a better future for their communities.

The AD and GKD are beginning community ratification to ask eligible voters to approve their respective agreements. If successfully ratified by all parties, including the passing of federal legislation, the two agreements will constitutionally protect and address harvesting, land ownership, resource management, and other rights and benefits of the AD and GKD in their respective agreement areas within the existing boundaries of Nunavut and the Northwest Territories. GKD and AD have shared Nuh Nene and Nuhenéné, respectively, with the barren-ground caribou herds, and their culture, history, economy, way of life, and overall well-being are tied to the movement and health of these herds.

We look forward to finalizing this important work and seeing the positive change these historic agreements will have for the members of the Athabasca Denesų́liné and Ghotelnene K'odtįneh Dene.

Quotes

“Athabasca Denesų́liné people are pleased to reach this agreement initialling milestone after many years of negotiations. The dedication, wisdom, and determination of our Elders paved the way to make this challenge become a reality with the recognition of our ancestral rights throughout Nuhenéné, our traditional territory encompassing parts of the Northwest Territories and Nunavut. We look forward to finalizing our Agreement through the ratification process with our 3 Denesų́liné First Nations of Black Lake, Fond du Lac, and Hatchet Lake in the coming months.”

- Ron Robillard
Chief Negotiator and President, Athabasca Denesų́liné Né Né Land Corporation

“We are hopeful the Ghotelnene K’odtjneh Dene Agreement will be the basis to work collaboratively on rebuilding our Nation-to-Nation relationship with the Crown.”

- Chief Simon Denechezhe
Northlands Denesuline First Nation

“We are proud of what we have accomplished so far and eagerly waiting to see what the future holds.”

- Chief Jason Bussidor
Sayisi Dene First Nation

“Congratulations on this milestone in negotiations of the Athabasca Denesųliné Agreement and the Ghotelnene K’odtjneh Dene Agreement. The Government of Nunavut is pleased with the progress and looks forward to the successful finalization and ratification of the Agreements. We will continue to be full partners in fulfilling the terms of these 2 new treaties in Nunavut.”

- The Honourable P.J. Akeeagok
Premier of Nunavut

“This milestone brings us closer to clarifying and confirming the rights of the Athabasca Denesųliné and Ghotelnene K’odtjneh Dene in the Northwest Territories. This represents a profound step toward renewing the relationship between our governments based on respect.”

- R.J. Simpson
Premier of the Northwest Territories

“We have successfully come to a significant milestone in the Treaty negotiation process. Today is another symbol of our dedication to a renewed relationship with the Athabasca Denesųliné and the Ghotelnene K’odtjneh Dene. Strong Nation-to-Nation relations and good territorial partnerships advance Indigenous self-determination and have allowed us to reach this momentous occasion together.”

- The Honourable Gary Anandasangaree
Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations, Government of Canada

Quick facts on Athabasca Denesųliné

- The members of the Black Lake First Nation, Fond du Lac First Nation, and Hatchet Lake Denesųliné First Nation located in northern Saskatchewan are collectively

known as the Athabasca Denesų́liné. Nuhenéné is the Athabasca Denesų́liné's traditional territory, covering northern Saskatchewan and parts of the Northwest Territories and Nunavut.

- The Athabasca Denesų́liné Agreement, often referred to as the North of 60 Agreement, concludes years of negotiations and addresses Athabasca Denesų́liné's constitutionally protected rights and benefits within their traditional territory in the Northwest Territories and Nunavut.

Quick facts on Ghotelnene K'odtjneh Dene

- The Sayisi Dene First Nation and Northlands Denesų́liné First Nation are known collectively as Ghotelnene K'odtjneh Dene, which means the "barren lands people." Since time immemorial, Ghotelnene K'odtjneh Dene have lived in the barren lands of what is now known as Nunavut, the Northwest Territories, Manitoba, and Saskatchewan. This land is called Nuh Nene, which means "our land."
- The Ghotelnene K'odtjneh Dene Agreement addresses Ghotelnene K'odtjneh Dene's constitutionally protected rights and benefits within their traditional territory in the Northwest Territories and Nunavut.
- In 1993, Sayisi Dene First Nation and Northlands Denesų́liné First Nation filed a Statement of Claim in federal court against Canada, Nunavut Tunngavik Incorporated, and the Government of the Northwest Territories. The agreement will settle the Samuel/Thorassie litigation.
- After nearly 7 years of litigation followed by over 20 years of negotiations, Sayisi Dene First Nation, and Northlands Denesų́liné First Nation are looking forward to the next steps in their long journey of rights recognition.

Associated links

- [Athabasca Denesų́liné](#)
- [Ghotelnene K'odtjneh Dene](#)

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