



Comprehensive Land Claims in the NWT

What's it all about?

Land and self-government negotiations are not the same, but since 1996, the two have often been negotiated together.

Aboriginal people have always had a special relationship with both the land they lived on and the natural resources that sustained them. They consider this relationship to be an integral part of their culture and identity. Recognition of this relationship through treaties is a primary goal of Aboriginal peoples. The fair resolution of comprehensive land claims through treaty-making is a priority of the Government of Canada. The nature and extent of Aboriginal rights to lands and resources must be set out to provide certainty for all Canadians.

Comprehensive land claim negotiations are aimed at resolving Aboriginal rights to land and resources. They address concerns raised by Aboriginal peoples, governments and third parties about who has the legal right to own or use lands and resources in areas under claim. They deal with Aboriginal rights that have not been dealt with by treaty or other legal means.

The Dene in the Northwest Territories signed Treaties 8 and 11 with the Government of Canada in the early 1900s. However, land provisions in these historical treaties were not implemented. So, in the 1970s, the Government of Canada agreed to resolve land issues through modern-day treaty-making, also called land or comprehensive claims negotiations.

In 1986, the federal government announced a new comprehensive claims policy and its intention to negotiate and clarify the rights of Aboriginal groups to lands and resources. In doing so, negotiations strive to promote Aboriginal groups' economic growth and self-sufficiency.

In order to achieve these objectives, settlement agreements define a wide range of rights and benefits including rights to hunt and fish; guaranteed participation in land, water, wildlife, and environmental management; financial compensation; a share of resource revenue; measures to stimulate economic development; and a role in the management of heritage resources and parks in the settlement area. Land negotiations may also involve discussions of self-government. Self-government and land claims are not the same, but may be negotiated together.

Resolving land claims will benefit all northerners by creating a stable and predictable environment that will, in turn, encourage economic development in the north.

Where we're at

In the NWT, 3 land claims have been settled:

- Inuvialuit Final Agreement
- Gwich'in Comprehensive Land Claim Agreement
- Sahtu Dene & Metis Comprehensive Land Claim

One Agreement-in-Principle has been reached:

- Dogrib Comprehensive Land Claim and Self-government Agreement-in-Principle

Other negotiations and processes are ongoing, including:

- Akaitcho Treaty 8 Land, Resources, and Self-government Negotiations
- Beaufort Delta/Inuvialuit & Gwich'in Self-government Negotiations
- Deh Cho Process
- Déline Community Self-government Negotiations
- Salt River Treaty Land Entitlement Process
- South Slave Metis Tribal Council Land and Resources Negotiations

More background

Web pages:

Comprehensive Claims in Canada: www.inac.gc.ca/pubs/information/treaty.html

Comprehensive Claims Policy & Status of Claims: www.inac.gc.ca/subject/claims/comp/briem.html

Specific Claims: www.inac.gc.ca/pubs/information/info121.html

Fact sheets:

Advantages of Land and Self-government Negotiations

The Negotiation Process

Status of Land and Self-government Negotiations

Fact sheets and publications are available by contacting

Communications Directorate

Department of Indian and Northern Development, NWT Region

(867) 669-2576