



May 2020 Update

About GCI

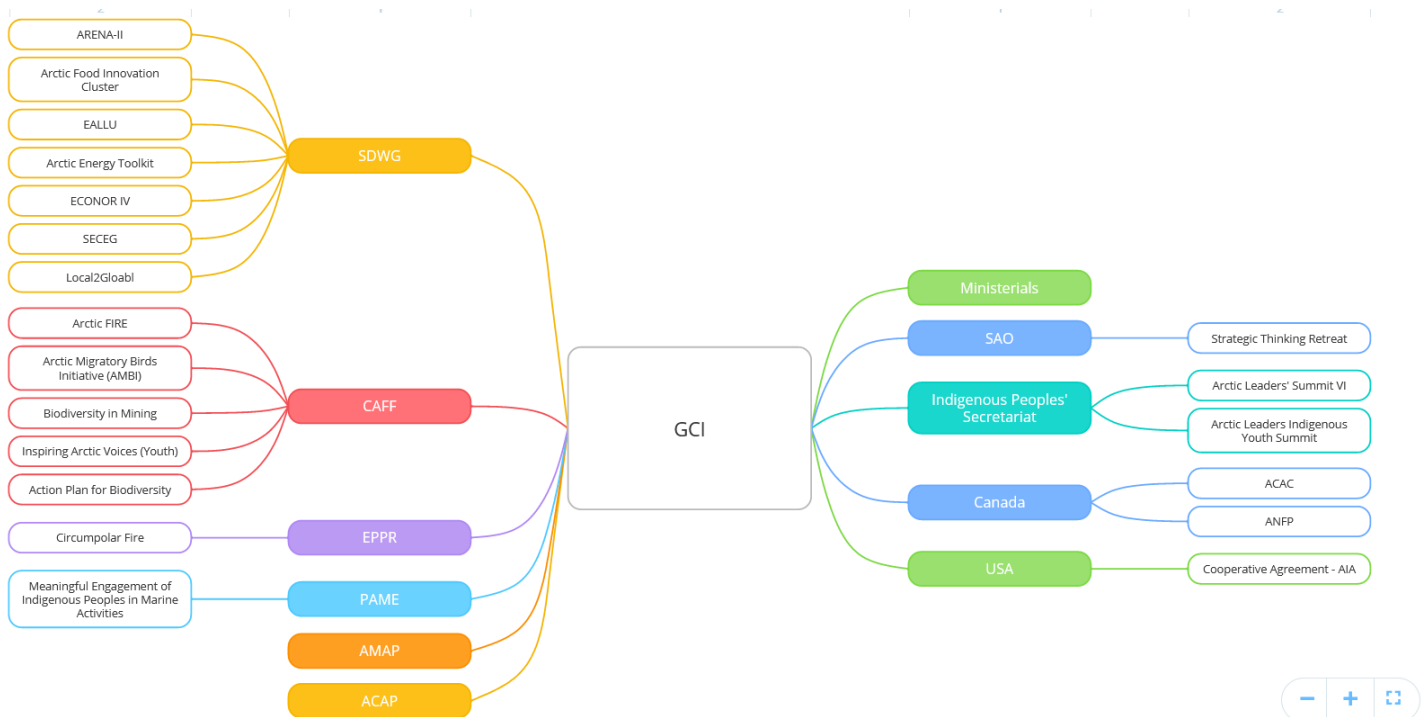
Gwich'in Council International (GCI) represents 9,000 Gwich'in in the Northwest Territories (NWT), Yukon, and Alaska as a Permanent Participant in the Arctic Council; the only international organization to give Indigenous peoples a seat at the decision-making table alongside national governments. The Arctic Council is a forum for cooperation, collaboration, and interaction, and has six working groups advancing projects, partnerships, and networks.

GCI's Board provides leadership, governance, and oversight to the staff and activities of the organization. Board members also participate in meeting, Arctic Council events, and are a link to the other Nations, Permanent Participants, and Observer organizations. In May 2020, GCI welcomed new Board member Erin Linklater, appointed by Vuntut Gwichin First Nation. There remains one vacant Board seat held by CATG.

GCI's recent Board meetings include: February 24th 2020; April 20th, 2020; and April 27th, 2020. GCI will be celebrating its 20th anniversary on July 14, 2020.

Key Engagements and Activities

GCI participates in various working groups, Arctic Council events, and activities to advance our mission and work. We also lead projects, and see our work taken up by others. The diagram below shows the different working groups on the left, projects listed on the far left, and relationships and key events on the right.





Three notable activities are:

- 1) **ARENA-II Program** – Arctic Renewable Energy Networks Academy – two Gwich'in participants have been invited to be part of the 2020 cohort, which will result in mentoring; site visits to Nunavut, Alaska, and Iceland for on-site learning with energy champions from across the Arctic; and support for their projects. Due to the COVID-19 Pandemic, the on-site sessions are being postponed and the cohort will be announced and connected virtually early summer 2020. More information can be found here: <http://arena.alaska.edu/>
- 2) **Economy of the North 2020 Report (ECONOR IV)** – GCI is contributing to this report which provides a circumpolar overview of the economy, socioeconomic conditions, and sustainability issues in the Arctic. More information can be found here: <https://www.sdwg.org/econor-iv-the-economy-of-the-north-2020/>
- 3) **Wildfire management projects** – GCI is leading two wildfire-related projects to build opportunities, connections to resources, and increased ability to respond to catastrophic wildfires in the Arctic.

COVID-19 Impacts

The coronavirus has impacted the world, communities across the Arctic, the work of the Arctic Council, and shifted how GCI operates. Two events with scheduled Gwich'in participants were cancelled in March (One Health, One Future Conference in Fairbanks, Alaska; and the Caribou-Reindeer Knowledge Exchange in Guovdageaidnu/ Kautokeino, Norway), and numerous other events have been cancelled or rescheduled. Meetings have been postponed and/or moved online, and key discussions are occurring virtually.

In June 2020, the Senior Arctic Officials (SAOs) will consider the role of the Arctic Council in the context of the COVID-19 Pandemic. In preparation, a briefing is being developed including examples from Gwich'in communities in how governments and organizations are responding. The "Pandemic Stories and Conversations" project, activities and leadership by Gwich'in governments and communities, and resources to enable families to get on the land are being shared with the preparation committee.

Outreach and Engagement

Our plan to have extensive engagement with Gwich'in membership at the Gwich'in Gathering has been postponed, and we are moving efforts online. In the upcoming months, we'll be sharing opportunities for contributions and contests to promote connections across Gwich'in communities. We are also building partnerships with other organizations and institutions to better engage youth and students.

Contact Us

Devlin Fernandes, Executive Director, Yellowknife Canada

GCI.executivedirector@gmail.com // 778-884-0152

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/GwichinCouncil/>