



June 2021 Update

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.

We provide input to national and international policy initiatives which affect Gwich'in internationally, including to Canada's Arctic and Northern Policy Framework; Ministerial meetings with foreign ministers from the eight Arctic states; and briefings with senior Arctic Officials from USA and Canada.

Key Activities



From left: Chief Gary Harrison, US Secretary Antony Blinken, US Senator Murkowski, GCI Co-Chair Edward Alexander. Second row: Jimmy Stotts, Liza Mack

Arctic Council Ministerial Meeting

Every two years, the Arctic Council Chairmanship rotates between member States. Arctic State Ministers and Permanent Participant Heads of Delegation meet to review and approve deliverables, reaffirm their commitment to cooperation and collaboration, and approve workplans for the coming term. GCI participated in May 2021, and the highlights included:

- The Reykjavik Declaration and Arctic Council 10-year Strategic Plan were approved.
- GCI's [intervention](#), presented by Co-Chair Edward Alexander, shared the story of Ch'iteehaakwaii and the need to address the great challenges facing the Arctic and the world collectively.
- Iceland completed their chairmanship.
- The Russian Federation took on the Arctic Council chairmanship, presenting a program with 4 focus areas: People of the Arctic, including Indigenous Peoples; Environment protection, including Climate Change; Socioeconomic Development; and Strengthening of the Arctic Council.
- Meeting with Canadian Minister of Foreign Affairs Marc Garneau and staff, raising issues of Jay Treaty, cross-border migration and access to services, and importance of the Porcupine Caribou.
- Meeting with USA Secretary of State Antony Blinken, Senator Lisa Murkowski, Arctic Special Coordinator Jim DeHart and staff for a fulsome discussion on cross-border mobility and service delivery, importance of the Porcupine Caribou, Indigenous knowledge, funding, and participation.



Meeting with Canadian Minister of Foreign Affairs Marc Garneau



Meeting US Arctic Coordinator Jim DeHart

The full Ministerial meeting can be viewed here: <https://vimeo.com/554636515>

Local 2 Global: Youth Digital Stories and Community Exchange

GCI partnered with the Western Arctic Youth Collective (WAYC) to bring and build on the Arctic Council's Sustainable Development Working Group project Local 2 Global in Inuvik, NT. With a focus on mental health and wellbeing, WAYC planned and delivered three days of virtual and in-person events, including film screenings, a reverse Town Hall with youth and elected leaders, discussion panels, speakers, and beading and paint workshops.

Over 57 people participated, and WAYC created a Guide to Running Events so others can take on similar events in the future. The full program report and guide are available on our website: <https://gwichincouncil.com/local-2-global>

Mashi' cho to WAYC – especially Jacey, Holly, Alyssa, and Bobbi Rose, the Project Advisory Committee, Gwich'in Tribal Council, CIRNAC, Mr. Bodnar at East Three Secondary School, Education, Culture, and Employment Department at the Government of the Northwest Territories, and the Inuit Circumpolar Council for your leadership, support, and involvement.



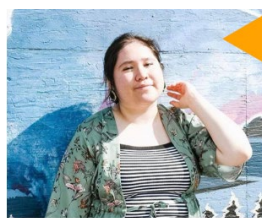
Participants at the Local to Global Reverse Town Hall, March 2021 in Inuvik, NT



Bringing Gwich'in members into GCI work

From February – April 2021, four project coordinators worked with us tasked with unique but related projects. The positions were intended to: increase understanding and awareness across Gwich'in membership of GCI; provide opportunities for learning and development while contributing to organizational priorities; building capacity within individuals and the organization; create talent and recruitment networks; and result in meaningful work and deliverables. We are building on their work and finding ways to advance it. Key learnings included:

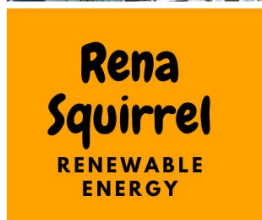
- Building communications and engagement across the Gwich'in Nation will require different strategies and tools to reach people on and off social media, in different villages and communities. We have to take a broad approach.
- Youth programming must be led by youth, and a GCI Youth Ambassadors Program must include mentorship, meaningful opportunities, and support.
- A Gwich'in Knowledge Symposium would be welcomed to bring Gwich'in knowledge holders and scholars, but it must include Elders, youth, and scholars from across the Nation, and be an open space for learning, networking, and discussions.
- Renewable Energy practices and experiences vary across the Nation, but there are many examples to learn from and build on.



**Joelle
Charlie**
MEMBERSHIP
ENGAGEMENT



Ashley Ens
KNOWLEDGE
SYSTEMS



**Rena
Squirrel**
RENEWABLE
ENERGY



Spring 2021
PROJECT
COORDINATORS



**Dakota
Norris**
YOUTH
AMBASSADORS



Mashi' cho to Ashley, Dakota, Joelle, and Rena for your amazing work!

Amplifying Gwich'in Voices in the Arctic

Some of the activities and meetings we participated in December 2020-June 2021 are:

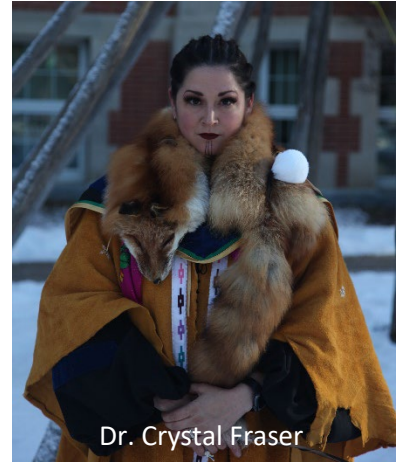
- Third Arctic Science Ministerial Meeting, Tokyo Japan and virtual
- Panel on Arctic Governance <https://youtu.be/KSLc-eJfZfo>
- University of the Arctic Congress, Iceland and virtual
- Arctic Council Senior Arctic Official and Working Group meetings – Sustainable Development Working Group, Conservation of Arctic Flora & Fauna, and Emergency Prevention, Preparedness, and Response
- The Arctic in 25 Year: First Annual Youth Symposium <https://www.wilsoncenter.org/event/arctic-25-years-first-annual-international-youth-symposium>
- Arctic Development Expo, hosted virtually and in Inuvik, NT
- One Health, One Future Conference, Fairbanks AK and virtual



Governance Update

In January 2021, Dr. Crystal Fraser joined the GCI Board, nominated by Gwich'in Tribal Council.

Crystal Gail Fraser is Gwichyà Gwich'in and originally from Inuvik and Dachan Choo Gèhñjik in the Northwest Territories. Her PhD research focused on the history of student experiences at Indian Residential Schools in the Inuvik Region between 1959 and 1996. Crystal's work makes a strong contribution to how scholars engage with Indigenous research methodologies and theoretical concepts, our understanding of Indigenous histories during the second half of the twentieth century, and how northern Canada was unique in relation to the rest of the settler nation.



Dr. Crystal Fraser

In May 2021, we said goodbye to Director Kibbe Tetlich. Vuntut Gwitchin Government and the Council of Athabaskan Tribal Governments are working on nominating Directors to their seats.

Coming up in the next 4 months

- **Scoping Food Security and Entrepreneurship** – The Arctic Council is looking at ways to support food innovation and food security, recognizing the integral link between food, health, wellbeing, economy, and culture. Rena Squirrel is researching what activities are underway in different communities and villages so we can build a strategy to amplify, connect, and support them.
- **Arctic Energy Toolkit Video** – the Arctic Community Energy Planning and Implementation Toolkit continues to be used and we welcome suggestions for improvements. We will be sharing more about it through a video this summer.
- **Strategy for Engagement during the Russian Federation Chairmanship** – the Russian Federation has an ambitious plan for their 2-year chairmanship, and we will be assessing their plans, events, and priorities to determine where GCI priorities and interests align. We will share opportunities for involvement as they become available.
- **2020-2021 Annual Report & Writing Contest** – we are working on our Annual Report, which will be published with the winners of the 2020 Writing Contest. Copies will be mailed to communities and villages in September and distributed electronically and on our website.

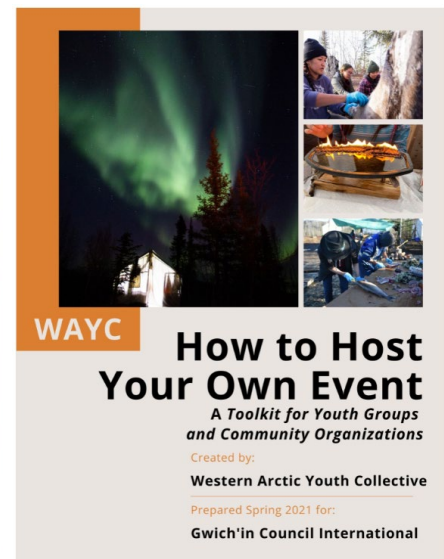
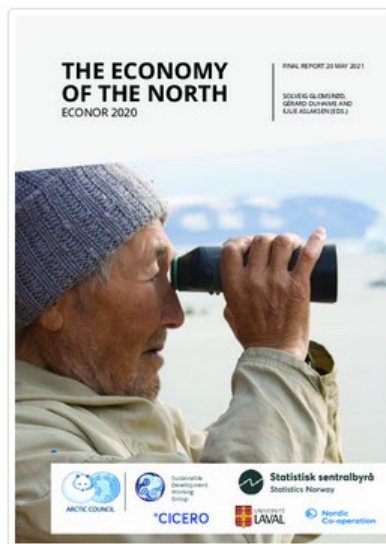




New and Exciting

We have been involved with Arctic Council projects in the past few months we are pleased to share with you:

- 1) **Pan-Arctic Report on Gender Equality in the Arctic** – in the third phase of the Arctic Gender Equality project, this report focuses on People and Communities of the Arctic and includes contributions from Gwich'in scholar Dr. Jessica Black and highlights Vuntut Gwitchin Government's Old Crow Solar Project. Executive Summary and Report here: <https://arcticgenderequality.network/>
- 2) **Economy of the North 2020 Report** – includes a submission on the Caribou Economy, and calls for recognition of, and attention to, subsistence and informal economies as sustained and important today. <https://oaarchive.arctic-council.org/handle/11374/2611>
- 3) **Arctic Renewable Energy Networks Academy (ARENA)** – despite COVID-19 delays, there is renewed commitment to the program and partners are meeting in September to discuss measures to roll out safely in 2022.
- 4) **Circumpolar Wildland Fire project** – a new project coordinator from the US State Department is helping, along with University of Alaska Fairbanks partners, advancing discussions and research on operational cooperation. See our latest update: <https://gwichincouncil.com/wildland-fire>
- 5) **WAYC Guide: How to Host Your Own Event** – a how-to guide for youth and others <https://gwichincouncil.com/local-2-global>



Contact Us

Devlin Fernandes, Executive Director, Yellowknife Canada

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

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