

Breakout Session 1B: Relationship to Land

February 25, 2025

1:15 PM – 2:45 PM

Moderator: Dr. Hayden King, Executive Director, Yellowhead Institute, Toronto Metropolitan University

Speakers:

- Dr. John B. Zoe—Tłıchq Government
- Kunuk Inutiq—Piruvik Centre and Yellowhead Institute

Hayden King:

- Research Project: challenges of implementation of Modern Treaties – common challenges
 - What are those challenges?
 - Political reasons. Lack of political will to discuss what implementation would look like
 - Focus shifted to education – young people, specifically Indigenous people more generally
- What was done in the project:
 - Educate and drive through implementation.
 - Six publications/workshops/education tools/community collaborators.
 - Reconceptualizing what Modern Treaties mean and how to implement them.
 - E.g. Do Modern Treaty communities have more rights than non-modern treaty communities? / How do land claims in the Nunavut context enable food sovereignty etc.?
 - Publishing a volume.
 - Mapping a common theme – impacts how resources are managed.
 - The map is on the Yellowhead Institute's website:
<https://treatymap.yellowheadinstitute.org/>

John B. Zoe:

- How Indigeneity can be preserved in the implementation of Modern Treaties.
 - Going deeper. When were before and we have been so isolated from it.
 - Strengthening exercise by using our own methods. We are used to being told what to do and we have been hurting for over a hundred years
 - Where do we go from here when we have an agreement?
 - We need to gather our strengths. The strength from before colonization,

- Modern Treaties, churches. Strength for the knowledge of land systems.
 - Reports created in English to receive funding require conforming to the Western system.
 - We are looking at recognition when we talk about self-governance.
 - Going deep means using knowledge from the ancestors.
- How to Indigenize?
 - Two distinct parts to the process: recognition of what we had before vs funding from the government to collaborate with universities etc.
 - We provide information to make regulation friendlier.
 - It does nothing to strengthen our relationship to our land and each other.
 - Our relationship with land, language, and culture stays weak.
 - We go from conference room to conference room when we need to go to the land and offering places and learn from Elders who have not been to residential schools.
 - Fear is holding people back from learning from the land and gaining Traditional Knowledge.
 - Legacy of the church.
 - The church is not there anymore but it's weight and impact are.
 - Our strength will come from learning about our ways of life.
 - Knowledge needs to be flowing but instead money is.
- How Indigenous people can apply their own law?
 - With Modern Treaties, they are always looking for a third party to give it some form of recognition.
 - Use the system to recognize the policy implementation in the system
 - When that is complete, we go home, and we have created something between universities or partners.
 - The next step would be recognition of ourselves.
 - When we do research, we need to look at land systems, culture, and ways of life.
 - We have had schools of language for thousands of years.
 - Everyday activity, everyday living. This is language, culture, and way of life.
 - Using our own system. We need to awaken our systems instead of relying on the Western system to come fix it.

Kunuk Inutiq:

- Trying to apply our own laws
 - There are four key areas in Nunavut Land Claims Agreements. In two, Inuit are being “allowed” to participate in decision-making.

- Self-determination means independent thinking outside the government and thinking critically about how we want our communities to be.
 - We need to have that space for spiritual and intellectual self-determination. When we're reacting to the government, we lose that space.
 - It is personal. From there you get to society. It doesn't always have to do with the government
 - Our relationship with the land impacts our spirit. It's important for how we relate to Canada and create spaces.
 - Not everything should rely on the relationship with Canada. We need to allow the space for self-determination on our terms and for where that's happening in our communities.
- Efforts to decolonize regulation
 - Find ways to assert our own way of life
 - Article 5 of the Wildlife Act requires you to hunt large mammals.
 - Wildlife legislation needs to be in agreement with the Wildlife Act because it has to fit in the Canadian system
 - Polar bears are not safe to eat when fully grown
 - Communities create their own knowledge and apply Inuit law to hunt and don't pay attention to the Wildlife Act.
- There are barriers to Modern Treaty negotiations: At what point, can Indigenous people switch to their own law?
 - Self determination
 - Half the battle is us believing that we can.
 - There are questions like do we have the right? Rights are often seen as a responsibility. Relationship of reciprocity vs. the Western definition of right (which is entitlement).
 - Having the space to think about our relationships. What does the space look like? First nations in BC are setting a really high bar.
 - We don't necessarily need to enter Land Claims Agreements. But the problem becomes the economic piece. How companies can develop wealth, so they have more space to do that.

Q&A:

- **Q:** Is there a role for traditional hereditary systems in Modern Treaties?
 - **A:** Not explicitly. Westminster-style government is how it functions, and rules of order are used by corporations to function. We need to rethink how our organizations are functioning. Self-determination in Nunavut is a façade. The measure of success should come from the community. We are starting to get

there.

- **A:** You find out a lot by being on the land with other people. Nobody talks about that because we are always on the Western side. Everything is related to the land. We need to talk about what the land means to us and everything comes from there. We call it research, but it's a strengthening exercise. We need to make an application to ourselves.