

TRIBUTE TO JAMES BENNET FIRTH

AUGUST 15, 1951 –
FEBRUARY 14, 2023

FROM DENE NATION AND DENENDEH DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

James Firth was a humble man. Even those who knew him well would be surprised at his many and varied accomplishments, because they never would have heard about them from him.

James began his political leadership on behalf of the Gwich'in as Vice-President of the Mackenzie Delta Tribal Council, which later became the Gwich'in Tribal Council (GTC) and was instrumental in negotiating the Gwich'in Comprehensive Land Claim Agreement. Once negotiations were completed in 1992, he turned his efforts to implementation as Chief of the Inuvik Native Band from 1993 to 2010 and sat on the GTC Board of Directors in his role as President of the Nihtat Gwich'in Council which was established as part of the Gwich'in Agreement. He also served on the Gwich'in Renewable Resource Board since its inception from 1993 to 2010.

James Firth was passionate about living the Dene and Gwich'in lifestyle and was known as a successful hunter and trapper, his fondest memories came from time spent at his cabin at Sunny Lake.

James worked for Northwestel for 40 years until he retired in 2012. In addition to his political leadership, James was an astute businessman who then built a successful construction and remediation company in Inuvik, J.B. Firth Enterprises Ltd.

James was given the opportunity to utilize his considerable political and business savvy when he was nominated by the Gwich'in to serve two terms as Director on the Denendeh Development Corporation (DDC) and Denendeh Investments Incorporated (DII) boards between 2000 – 2010 and 2014 – 2021. He was one of the founding members of DII when it was established in 2006. He was well-liked and respected by his fellow board members and they selected him as Chair of DDC and Vice-Chair of DII as a strong and steady leader who believed the Dene



were stronger when working together.

He was also known in business circles as someone who would stand up for the rights and interests of the Gwich'in and the Dene. Rounding out that strength, he was also a kind-hearted, compassionate and generous person who encouraged others. And he was always gentle and supportive of the people who worked for him. James resigned from the Board of DDC and DII in March 2021 to devote more time to the things he loved the best, his family and being on the land.

James Firth had an enormous impact on Dene Nation, DDC and DII for decades and will be deeply missed for his leadership and as a much-loved friend. He had an unwavering belief the Dene were capable politically, economically, socially, and culturally and that is his legacy to all in Denendeh.

The leadership and staff of Dene Nation, DDC and DII would like to extend their condolences to James' wife Verna, his children Bradley and Jaclyn, his eight grandchildren, other relatives and his many, many friends across the North at this sad time.

We will miss you our brother, our friend and our leader.