



**YUKON
REGION**

A Yukon that Leads

Statement from AFN Yukon Regional Chief Kluane Adamek

July 14, 2021

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Assembly of First Nations Yukon Regional Chief Offers Condolences Following the Passing of Chief Paul Birckel - *Nashiya*

Whitehorse, Yukon – Assembly of First Nations (AFN) Yukon Regional Chief Kluane Adamek offer her condolences to the family and friends of Chief Paul Birckel – *Nashiya* – a long serving Chief of Champagne and Aishihik First Nations, and a revered Southern Tutchone and Yukon First Nation Leader. Chief Birckel peacefully passed away at the age of 82 in Whitehorse, Yukon.

Regional Chief Adamek said, “the AFN Yukon Region joins the family of Chief Paul Birckel – *Nashiya* – and Champagne and Aishihik First Nations in mourning the loss of this highly respected leader. A true legend who contributed a lifetime to advancing self-determination. He will be greatly missed for his dedication to his community, leadership, and vision for a better life for his people. The work and triumphs of Chief Birckel are evident when we look at the Champagne and Aishihik First Nations and the foundation that they are built upon. During the 20 years that he spent as Chief, he led CAFN to negotiate and sign its landmark final Self-Governing Agreement, work that has proven to have tangible impacts for all CAFN citizens today.”

Chief Birckel served as Chief of Champagne and Aishihik First Nations for two decades, during which advanced his Nation through the negotiations and signing of its Land Claim and Self-Government Agreements. These Agreements prepared the Champagne and Aishihik First Nations for a future of true self-government and self-determination. It continues to be used as a template and benchmark for future self-government agreements across Canada. Chief Birckel’s steadfast commitment to building a better future for his people was evident through his lifelong career undertaking major land claim negotiations with the federal and territorial governments, and bringing together three major organizations to form the Council of Yukon First Nations (CYFN). Today, the CYFN continues to support Indigenous people and their rights

across the territory, and the results of Chief Birckel's work can be felt by all Yukon First Nations peoples regardless of community, geography, or status.

In 2000, Paul became just one of six Yukoners to ever be named an Indspire Award Laureate and in 2002, he was awarded the Queen's Golden Jubilee Medal, an award which recognized the tremendous work that he accomplished in efforts to further his community's path to self-determination and self-government.

Paul Birckel was born on October 25, 1938 on the shores of Kluane Lake and spent his childhood traveling and living a traditional life in the Champagne and Aishihik First Nations and Kluane First Nation traditional territories. He attended residential school for several years in Whitehorse where he lost his ability to speak Dákwänjē (Southern Tutchone), however he always understood the language because his mother continued speaking it to him. As an adult, Paul lived and raised his family for many years in Whitehorse and Klukshu, and spent much of his time on the land near Dezadeash Lake with his wife Kathy where he continued living a traditional lifestyle of hunting, trapping, fishing and harvesting. He will be missed by his beloved friends and family including his three children, five grandchildren, and many great grandchildren.

A funeral procession will be taking place on Friday July 16th at 11am from Heritage North Funeral Home to Klukshu, with funeral services taking place the following day in Klukshu, Yukon.

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