



For Immediate Release

Anishinabek commit to completing constitutional work

ALDERVILLE FN (June 2, 2011) – Anishinabek Chiefs in Assembly have overwhelmingly approved the traditional values underlying Ngo Dwe Waangizid Anishinbaabe -- the Constitution of the 39 member First Nations.

Created in Anishinaabemowin – the Ojibwe language – by a group of Elders meeting on Manitoulin Island, the document says "The Creator placed the Anishinaabe on the earth", describing as "sacred gifts to guide them" the Seven Grandfather Teachings of Love, Truth, Respect, Wisdom, Humility, Honesty and Bravery.

It adds: "The Creator gave us sovereignty to govern ourselves." The words were inscribed on a piece of rawhide, stretched on a wooden frame.

"This is recognized in Section 35 of Canada's Constitution," said Grand Council Chief Patrick Madahbee. "First Nations have the inherent right to manage our own affairs. It is important that our own leaders – as well as Canada's – never forget this right."

The constitution will outline the process for establishing the Anishinabek Nation government, including provisions for eligible citizens, selection process for elections, and process for appeals and redress.

Madahbee noted that the United Nations International Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples re-affirms the rights of First Nations to "maintain and strengthen distinct political institutions, while retaining the right to participate in the political life of the State."

At their annual general assembly Chiefs endorsed a motion that provides Anishinabek communities one additional year to examine and provide suggestions for the draft constitution that was approved by Chiefs at a March convention in Garden River First Nation.

"Our Chiefs Committee on governance has done years of work and community engagement to get us to this point," said the Grand Council Chief, "but in the spirit of unity it was decided to provide all Chiefs one more year to complete their community work in engaging their citizens on the importance of having our own constitution.

"It is critical for us to take this fundamental governance step so our citizens can start moving away from the rules imposed upon us by others, such as the Indian Act."



Chiefs-in-assembly approved a resolution that named the constitution Ngo Dwe Waangizid Anishinaabe – All of our tribes in our nations," which resolution mover Chief Joe Hare of M'Chigeeng First Nation said carries the meaning similar to a team of horses working as a united team to do its work.

In approving the resolution, Anishinabek Chiefs agreed that the constitution's fundamental principles would be read aloud at each Grand Council Assembly, be endorsed in writing by each member First Nation, and that a detailed workplan will be circulated to member communities outlining the process of ratifying and proclaiming the Constitution at the 2012 Grand Council Assembly.

The Anishinabek Nation established the Union of Ontario Indians as its secretariat in 1949. The UOI is a political advocate for 39 member communities across Ontario, representing approximately 55,000 people. The Union of Ontario Indians is the oldest political organization in Ontario and can trace its roots back to the Confederacy of Three Fires, which existed long before European contact.

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