



For Immediate Release

Anishinabek ratify constitution; step to self-government

GARDEN RIVER FN (March 4, 2011) – The Anishinabek Nation has a constitution, an important step on the journey to creating its own government structure.

“Every nation in the world has its own constitution and Anishinabek citizens deserve the same,” said Grand Council Chief Patrick Madahbee. “This is an important milestone on the path to restoring our jurisdiction to govern our own affairs.”

Anishinaabe Chi-Naaknigewin received 78% support from voting delegates representing 30 of the Nation’s 39 communities. The ratification threshold had been established at 70% in advance of the three-day convention held in the territory of the Ojibways of Garden River.

The Anishinaabe Chi-Naaknigewin is a written constitution based on Anishinaabe world-view and traditions. It re-affirms Anishinabek nationhood and establishes a modern Anishinabek Government as a landmark step toward implementing inherent rights and jurisdictions and breaking free of Canada’s oppressive Indian Act regime.

Delegates discussed and debated the preamble and 11 articles of the draft document which came out of the first constitutional conference in Sault Ste. Marie in March, 2010.

In addition to the 30 Chiefs and appointed delegates who voted on behalf of their First Nations, more than 100 Anishinabek citizens observed the proceedings as non-voting participants. Though only appointed delegates of each First Nation had authority to vote on the constitution, all participants had the opportunity to speak from the floor.

The constitution’s articles include the Declaration of the Anishinabek Nation, establishment of Anishinaabemowin as the nation’s official language, principles of Anishinabek Nation government structure, and legislative powers.

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The Anishinaabe Chi-Naaknigewin will be brought forward for proclamation at the Grand Council Assembly in Alderville First Nation this coming June.

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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