

Minnesota Chippewa Tribe Constitution Reform Convention
Thursday, January 16, 2025
Shooting Star Event Center, Mahnommen, MN

Welcome by Patty Straub, W.E. Delegate

Invocation by Naabekwa.

Roll Call: Fond Du Lac, Grand Portage, Leech Lake, Mille Lacs, White Earth.

Welcome by Mike La Rocque.

MCT Article XII: The Amendment Process.

This is a discussion on how we are going to handle this 30% voting going forward, and the changes coming down. This has been put on hold for the moment by the TEC as they go forward with the MN Chippewa Indian blood topic. There have not been any finalized plans regarding this. The floor was open for comments.

Comments included discussion on delegate work, government models, Secretarial Election, and Leech Lake Delegate update.

Delegation work:

- The Facilitation sub-committee sets up our agendas.
- There's a process for change in the Delegate committee including a three-month period to bring information to the people and then bring it back for a vote. We get sent in different directions by what the Tribal Executive Committee (TEC) is doing, when we have one month to prepare for a TEC meeting. This is based on what the TEC requests of us at the TEC meetings.
- The Delegate work has only been 4 years in person, 2 years were online during covid, and the work has been going well.
- The constraints of the Constitution are frustrating. We have to be independent in our own bands because we are all independent sovereigns, and we need each other's support.
- 1936 Model of Government example. Patty Straub, W.E. Delegate read the document. There needs to be a right to determine our own freedoms within our bands. This is the general consensus for us. We are looking at ways to model our constitutions, charters or government documents.
- The Reservation Business Committees (RBC) is a business committee, but we treat them as a Tribal Council.

- BIA office is in Bemidji. One of the issues is that the BIA doesn't care what the Tribes say or want. The corporations are not following the BIA processes. The BIA doesn't follow their own processes.

Secretary election:

- It is important to note that to change the constitution we do need a Secretarial Election. We need to proceed with the Secretarial Election Removal (Article XII), get it done, so we are under our own elections. We have never used/achieved the 30%. Recommend we do what we have always done, use the 30% of the voters. The Secretary of Interior stated 30% of the registered voters. Our task is to look at options to see how we are going to meet that 30%, and then eliminate it. We need to decide and let our elected officials know.
- The TEC needs to interpret the 30%, they are the only ones who can interpret this. They have said verbally at TEC meetings that it is 30% of eligible voters. It was stated the TEC has said they are not going to write it down because we are sovereign nations. How do we get around that and decide what the threshold is without their interpretation? Talk to your TEC members about this issue.
- The Leech Lake Delegation has been working hard to create their own constitution. Leech Lake is going to unbind ourselves and be the sovereign nation we are. The Delegation is still discussing this so we are prepared with recommendations when the TEC is ready to move forward on this.

Break

Jamie Edwards: Special Advisor on Government Affairs on Mille Lacs Band. Spends a fair amount of time at the state capital, less at the federal level. His department handles communication for the MLB Tribe.

- Things have become complicated in the state. We have one seat difference in the House and Senate. This is going to make the work at the state legislature difficult moving forward. At the Federal Level there is a three-seat majority in the House and a six-seat majority in the Senate. Republicans control both bodies. Trump will be sworn in on Monday as the 49th President.
- We should all be prepared for reductions in certain grant program dollars, things that are the trust responsibilities of the Fed Government. They want a more efficient scale back government operation. Established Ad-Hoc committees who are going through the Federal government line by line to trim the fat, "starve the beast".
- Pete Hegseth is tuning in to the early confirmation hearings of potential cabinet members. This is more organized and tuned into the GOP machinery. The Trump Family

took over the GOP and was an outsider in the first administration. Congress is run by the GOP.

- There have been Indian Fighters in elected officials, ex: Pete Stauber was anti-Indian in the early years. Tom Cole is a strong supporter, Senator Tina Smith, Sen Amy Klobuchar. We are trying to bridge those gaps and find ways and pathways to work with whoever is in office. Politics are like a pendulum that swings back and forth, sometimes in our favor, sometimes not.
- Tribes are not necessarily in the sight of congress and officials coming in, they have other efforts they are working on. We hope we aren't front and center as they change Washington in the second term and in Trump's agenda. We try to ensure that tribal nations are protected. We need to ensure that the trust responsibility is upheld. There is going to be change and change is difficult. Politics are a full contact sport. We need to be engaged, active and show up. We will get through this rough period of time.
- Jaime will send information to Birdie to share the Delegates.
- Question: Delegates are putting all their efforts on the congressional elections in 2 years. Jamie Edwards: Midterm elections favor the party that is not in power. Have a departure of normal voting parties.
- Question: Is there a strategy or gaining support in the senate? Jamie Edwards: NCAI has had a bipartisan approach for the Hill. Tribes have relationships with both parties in the states. Midwest Alliance of Sovereign Tribes for MAST. Annual Impact week in DC where regional teams are dispersed to talk to different congressional offices. East Coast Tribes have a group. Trust responsibility items like health care, transportation, education, etc. These bodies are closely divided at state and congressional level, they need each other to get through various initiatives. We have a fair number of allies. We meet to advocate for certain policy changes at the state level.
- Question: We rely on the Trust responsibilities, but not when we look at the makeup of Trump. Jaime Edwards: We all help each other at the state.
- Question: What are our strategies and leverages when developing strategies. This is at the Capital/WA DC. One strategy is to lay low for two years for we are not in Trump's eye, and if this administration is like the old one it may fall apart. Jaime Edwards: Self-governance Act was under Reagan. The Self-Determination Act was under Nixon. There are times when the GOP were in leadership when something good happened for Indians. Folks who were anti-Indian changed when they got into office at the Federal Level. We do have that trust obligation and relationship with the Federal government. Congressman Emmer used to fight with Indians but he changed since he went to Congress, he hasn't signed on anything that would do harm to Tribes. Tribes are dealt with in a different way at the Federal level Either stay off the radar or stay on the radar in a positive way. Be on the radar in a way to get things done. Tribes have built relationships with congress on both sides of the

isle. Don't have a pity party. We have to deal with reality and get things done. It's a very complicated legislative department in the state. We have to change our approach. Tribes have a lot of assets and there are talented advocates/lobbyists in DC who will move things forward. We have to work with what we got.

- Question: Doug Bergum, Department of Interior, has had some experience working with Tribal governments and he is the highlight of a potential cabinet post at the Federal level. BIA: There's not a lot of Native people working in the GOP posts. John who worked on document 2025, the provisions working with Tribal Governments were considered to be positive. He will know more when he comes back from DC and the Inaugural. Keep us informed of who the committee people are so we can contact them. Jaime Edwards: There's a shared power agreement in the Senate, in committees. He will share what he knows. We are still figuring out the landscape, and the budget is coming out here in the new future. There are going to be challenges. This administration is coal focused. The alternate energy from Biden will be rolled back. Talon Metals and Tamarac Mine Nickel effort: Tesla invested and purchased in future nickel that comes out of that mine. With Musk in this battle, it will become more complicated. Attorneys and advocates need to be prepared to do battle. Advocates are Gov. Walts and Peggy Flannigan, but we need to do more to protect our interest.
- Questions regarding the elimination of the Department of Education on the Federal level. Jaime Edwards: It's too early to have a real perspective on things. Trump attacked the Affordable Health Care Act and that never happened. He attacked the EPA and that never happened. Some of that is playing to his base and many members of Congress on both sides of the aisle have worked to improve and approve policy changes. Eliminating an agency is not as easy as Trump makes it sound. Trump has a majority, not a super majority. There will be things like immigration, and some other agencies may be resolved. Elimination of Federal Agencies will be difficult. Can direct lobby or direct advocate to protect our interests.
- Question: To form alliances, look at Indivisible .org. It's a reaction to the election. If you are disheartened by what has happened, get involved here. Jaime Edwards: It's incumbent on all of us to educate and develop allies at various levels, county boards etc. We have to continue to educate and create more allies. Trust responsibilities: we do have allies in the state and need to improve Federal relations on both sides. Winds change and in the next elections there will be a swing back into the center. Races were a lot closer than on election night once votes were recounted. We are still a divided country. We need to do what's important to protect tribal communities.

Update from Each Band/Reservation:

Fond du Lac: We are working on a new raffle to be an incentive for FDL members to become involved with our delegate group. We did a survey and raffled a beautiful quilt. Holding an incentive for Band members who interact in any way. We are utilizing the FDL paper that is

published on the FDLband.org website. We are pleased that people are getting involved. Youth are helping us out a bit. They have the draft of the Constitution started and are presenting it at meetings. Goals: complete the constitution, digital fliers, unified document. They meet weekly.

Grand Portage: Sandra stated they'd rather wait until next month when Michelle is available.

Leech Lake: Sally handed out a statement of support for resolution No. 2025-32, and read the statement of support. They are always being fair to members.

Mille Lacs Band: We are working on Mille Lacs Constitution. We completed the first Zoom Education meeting for members. We are using the Band newspaper and Facebook page. Yesterday we had a Delegate table at State of the Band. We gave swag (cup with contact information for questions) when people gave contact email information.

White Earth: Focus has been to provide Education to all the tribal members on the Constitutional work we are doing. We are making short videos and sharing it on our Facebook page and WE Website. Recently we put out a statement in support of the change of the MCT Election Ordinance to align with the MCT Tribe Constitution. Everybody's opinion is important, and even if we don't agree, we vote on what will go forward. Our subcommittee made some fabulous fliers regarding the constitution that were shared today.

Lunch Break.

Discussion & Update of the TEC Special meeting (Dec 12) Enrollment Amendment was put on hold to get more information from membership in each reservation. Were Delegates able to discuss with their members. This was to include all persons of MN Chippewa Indian blood.

Carol J, FDL: FDL would like to be inclusive to include membership. Article II Membership. Note that we are six bands under the same By-Laws of the Constitution and there are some words we can't rely on. This means MN Indian blood, not MN Chippewa Tribe blood. They must be a person on the role of 1941 criteria, someone who was born to parents whose names appear on that role. She doesn't think anyone on Red Lake was in that role. 1941-July 3, 1961, can be enrolled if they were enrolled by July 4, 1962. All children of at least ¼ born to a member of one enrolled can be a member but has to be enrolled within a year. If going by the constitution you must be ¼ blood and were enrolled within one year of your birth date. There's no retroactive provision for being born after 1961. We can amend that ordinance but not sure that's what we want to achieve.

Carol J: Court Opinion: We can't change the constitution by a regulation, so how can a resolution/ordinance change a constitution. The only way our constitution can be amended is through a Secretarial Election. Suggests the TEC continue to remove the Secretary of Interior from our constitution then continue to move on membership and enrollment. A tribal election will decide what the people want. Will this include the 2022 Lineal descendent? It's up to the people to decide ultimately. She thinks we have to go with the legal steps that are appropriate.

Carol J: We are the people that our ancestors agreed to this constitution. We are doing constitutional reform. This constitution doesn't even address treaty rights. We studied our treaties and we moved forward with them. Carol can't support this in the way it is processed right now. The fair part of inclusiveness is lineal descent. There are non-Indians enrolled. Nothing about adoptions of non-Indians to be enrolled. The Delegation is working on the constitutions. Carol hopes that fairness comes out in the end.

Fond Du Lac: Has been part of this discussion. We try to be inclusive. If we don't have a method that follows the rules ...we need to follow the way laid out.

Grand Portage: We haven't had a Delegate meeting yet to discuss this. Information has not gone out to the community yet. GP in general has always been in favor of the removal of blood quantum.

Leech Lake: Leech Lake Statement of Support of Resolution No. 2025 – 32. Resolution interpreting Red Lake blood to be included in the definition of Minnesota Chippewa blood in the Minnesota Constitution. Leech Lake puts forth their list of names for enrollment. The 1941 Roles: Mille Lacs are not even on the 1941 roles, but we are still Indians and members of the MCT. She is a citizen of the Leech Lake Band. The only sovereigns in the constitution are the people, the Chippewa people, not the RBC's. The only sovereignty we have is the people. Without the people, the foundation, there is no reservation, RBC, etc.

White Earth: The Delegation is not going to select the membership; we're putting that out to the people to decide membership. The ordinance does not change the constitution in any way. We change blood quantum all the time, and it goes through the Department of Interior. Anyone can contest the Red Lake blood and their appeal would be based on our constitution which states MN Chippewa Indian blood. This change does not hurt us. We have put out support statements on the statement to the TEC. This is one step in moving to change. The change will be in the Enrollment Ordinance, it will state the MN Chippewa Indian blood. It doesn't mean we are changing the constitution. We don't ever want to cease to exist. We are looking at the options available to us.

Mille Lacs Band: How does Red Lake respond to this? Answer: Red Lake is working with us so their enrollment office is working with our enrollment office, we have to request it one person at a time.

Annuity role was for census and it tracked what funds were given out. People were listed based on where they lived at the time. Annuities were paid by bands. There were occasional cases where a family was living somewhere and didn't get an annuity payment.

Discussion from White Earth members in attendance.

Issues include Tribal Trust lands, enrollment of elders under ¼ % blood quantum, requests for independent audits of Enrollment and Land offices, leased lots, families here only half of family is

enrolled, correcting enrollments before agreeing to lineal descent, IHS services, adoption policies.

This was noted to be a divide and conquer strategy, thinking from deficits points. It was stated that those people we are related to are our people as well. The Constitution didn't require blood quantum until 1961. In 1965 the RBC/TEC voted to rescind this but it wasn't passed.

These issues can be brought to the TEC meeting on Tuesday January 28.

White Earth facilitated an informal enrollment poll using a show of hands. Question was who voted to include the enrollment ordinance going through as the TEC ordinance. The yes had the majority vote. A self-identified descendent on zoom voted and then challenged the poll as not acceptable due to descendants being allowed to vote.

Break

Review and discussion on the Alliance Treaty Agreement. Mike Smith of Leech Lake reviewed the Alliance Document.

Subcommittee updates:

1. Finance Committee. They did meet and went over the draft of the application for the Bush Foundation grant. It will be submitted when it is reviewed.
2. TEC Subcommittee: Band needs to submit your report from your band to Jayne Bruce at MCT for the TEC meeting next Tuesday.
3. Facilitation Subcommittee meeting next Friday.
4. Drafting Subcommittee: Alliance document was presented to the MCT Delegate today.
5. Drafting Subcommittee meetings are held at 6:00 pm on Zoom. Everyone is welcome to attend.
6. Education Subcommittee: Completed a 15 Article series based on the current constitution to get information to the membership. Need to get a vote to approve at the February meeting. Money for education materials is sitting at the MCT. Next month's vote on funding of the printed materials.

Adjourn meeting at 3:17 pm.

January 27& 28, 2025 meeting at the TEC meeting at Fond du Lac.