

MCT Constitution Reform Meeting Sept. 19, 2025, at Grand Portage

Attendance: In person: Patty Straub-WE, Jana Williams-LL, Louis Johannsen-WE, Missy Plemel ??-WE, Emily Annette-WE, Mike Swan-WE, Fawn Roy-WE, Mykee Brown-WE, Cheryl Edwards-FDL, Aaron Fineday-LL, Tara Fineday-LL, Sally Fineday-LL, Michele Beeksma-GP, Marcie McIntire-GP
On Zoom-Sandra Borden-GP, John Lemire-GP, Carol Janick-FDL, Jolyn Donnell-WE, Donovan Staples-LL, Christina Bowstring-LL, Sybil Grund-WE, Claire Gonzales-FDL

Anishinaabeg Traditions and Respect

Billy Blackwell, a Grand Portage Elder, offered a prayer and shared traditional knowledge about a pipe, emphasizing the importance of respecting and preserving Anishinaabeg traditions. The conversation ended with a reminder to listen respectfully to the elders present. The meeting began with Billy Blackwell sharing traditional Anishinaabe stories and histories of various reservations, emphasizing the importance of cultural preservation.

Tribal Constitutional Reform Discussion

The group then discussed constitutional reform, focusing on removing the Secretary of the Interior from Article XII to allow for amendments to be made by tribal election. Carol presented a Drafting Committee's flowchart outlining the steps for this process, including the creation of a temporary interim council to oversee the transition. The group addressed concerns about the timeline and authority of the interim council, suggesting the need for more defined powers to ensure effective oversight. Patty inquired about the status of a resolution regarding voter eligibility, which Cheryl confirmed had been passed, changing the threshold to 30% of registered voters.

Tribal Constitution and Election Concerns

The group discussed concerns about MCT lands and the removal of the Secretary of the Interior from Article XII. They agreed that this change would likely be approved by the Department of the Interior, as many other tribes have already made similar changes. The delegates expressed frustration about the lack of transparency and communication from the TEC and ad hoc committee working on a uniform election code. They discussed the need for some form of oversight of the TEC, with suggestions for regular open community meetings and better communication with tribal councils. The group also touched on the importance of getting input from tribal members before making major decisions during the interim period.

Revisiting RBC and TEC Policy

Michele and Marcie McIntire highlighted the importance of maintaining transparency and accountability, while Carol presented a Drafting Committee document, a seven-point plan to improve the relationship between TEC and its constituents, which includes addressing issues such as meeting transparency and consultation with constituents. The group agreed to take a break to review the document and continue discussions in the next session.

Curriculum Video Editing Review

The meeting focused on reviewing educational session videos for a training curriculum. Cheryl explained that many of the existing videos need to be edited down from their current lengths to fit the 10-minute presentation time limit, and the full recordings will be made public after editing. The group discussed the need to update some content since the curriculum was developed three years ago, with Cheryl offering to resend the videos to delegates for review and feedback. The presentation structure includes sections on the MCT organization, enrollment options, Alliance and band constitutions, with 15-minute Q&A sessions after each main section.

Tribal Education Sessions Planning Meeting

The group discussed plans for 20 educational sessions to be allocated by tribes based on identified districts, with each delegation team responsible for planning and facilitating these sessions. A \$100,000 budget was confirmed for the sessions, including \$20,000 for miscellaneous expenses like media and printing. The committee agreed to email the presentation videos to delegates for review and comments by the October convention meeting, where feedback will be discussed. There were concerns raised about the temporary interim council's effectiveness, suggesting a focus on constructive feedback rather than criticism, while Cheryl confirmed the current delegate list and emphasized the need for accurate information about delegate changes.

Constitution Educational Document Review Discussion

The group discussed interim council time period procedures and community meetings, with Mykee suggesting written documentation for public comment opportunities. They explored the possibility of mandatory referendum voting before tribal changes, and Sally from Leech Lake highlighted the need to include TEC representation in their constitution. The delegation was tasked with reviewing the Minnesota Chippewa Tribal Constitution of 1964, which was enacted in 1936 and last amended in 2005, though they debated whether to list every amendment year.

The group discussed the definition and importance of constitutions, focusing on their role in establishing government structures, protecting rights, and ensuring stability. They revised the text to emphasize universal human rights, just laws, and the government's structure of the people. The participants also debated whether to include references to organizations in the definition, ultimately deciding it might be confusing for their context. They concluded by discussing the need to renumber footnotes and ensure proper citation of sources.

The group discussed the wording of the section about the Minnesota Chippewa Tribe's constitutional reform movement. They debated whether to include Sandy Lake, a tribe currently recognized by the federal government as part of the Minnesota Chippewa Tribe, in the document. The group agreed to simplify the closing paragraph by removing references to "Six Nations" and focusing on the current constitution. They also discussed the need to clearly identify the constitutional reform movement as separate from the Minnesota Chippewa Tribe. The group decided to send the document back to the Education Committee for further review and revision.

Project Management and Subcommittee Reform

The group discussed a project management proposal, with Carol supporting the idea of a project charter to track completed work and progress. Mykee expressed concerns about having one person in charge and suggested improving subcommittee participation instead. The group agreed to continue discussing the project management proposal at the next meeting, with a vote planned

for the following month. They also touched on the need for better subcommittee attendance and discussed holding subcommittee meetings during their regular conventions. The conversation ended with a brief discussion about a petition process for constitutional reform, with Carol clarifying that signatures from each tribe would contribute to the overall percentage required.