

Minnesota Chippewa Tribe Constitution Reform Convention Meeting Minutes
Friday, July 18, 2025 9:00-4:00 PM
Shooting Star Event Center, Mahnomen, MN

Invocation: Mike Swan

Welcome: Mike LaRocque, White Earth Secretary Treasurer. Discussed the importance of providing MCT member education on the MCT Constitution.

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

Ice Breaker.

Discussion: Tribal Executive Committee Meeting-July 14, 2025.

- A Resolution to was passed, 8-4, to remove the Secretary of Interior from MCT elections. The resolution that was passed was to define the 30% requirement. The Secretary of Interior pays for Secretary elections. If we remove Secretary of Interior, the tribes must pay for future elections.
- Resolution 32:15 is a resolution allowing all federally recognized Chippewa blood to be counted on enrollments. Resolution 32:15 will open up enrollment and affect enrollment determinations. This Resolution has already been passed.
- Registered voter definition: Process for a secretarial election; the Secretary of Interior first approves the election, MCT sends out a letter and document to the MCT members who fill out the registration form and send it back. Two weeks later they mail out a ballot. Notaries are utilized for ballots. That's how members vote and are registered. Our Constitution states that Secretarial elections are mail-in only. There have been waivers to allow in-person voting. Reservations will need to work on "Get Out The Vote" campaigns.
- Leech Lake wants to be rid of the secretary election so they can move on with their draft constitution, and implement a new government structure. This will be led by Local Indian Councils (LIC) and they will have codified laws for their Nation.
- White Earth Delegates are putting together education sessions, stressing Membership and education on the Secretarial Election process. The next Education Session is on July 20. White Earth will offer 4 options for membership and the majority vote is what the Delegation will go with. Other MCT Reservations are welcome to attend.
- The next TEC will be meeting in October 2025 in Fortune Bay/Bois Forte.
- There is a \$53,000 deficit in the 2025-2026 MCT budget. The MCT will hold a special meeting to discuss this, before October 1, to get the budget passed.
- TEC meetings now have a public comment period at the end of the TEC meetings. The TEC members stated, "We want to hear from the people." In the Constitution it states the majority rules.

- Checks and Balances. There is a committee working on a new election ordinance that will be put into place when the Secretary of Interior is removed. It will be in place before any election is in place. We do have a plan for checks and balances.
- Election reform: Question with the 50% plus 1 to win the primary election. This favors the incumbent. We need to change this.
- Phil Brodeen memo regarding the Secretary of Interior. In this memo he mentions the disadvantages of having the Secretarial Election. We do need checks and balances to guarantee that our members' voices are heard, and to make sure things are legitimate.
- Asking for clarity regarding the 30%. What they said was to revert back to the original interpretation. What is the original interpretation? Registered voters. Our people aren't participating.
- Research shows that historically elections have not met the 30% requirement. The Secretary of Interior added "registered" voters as the count in Federal Code, not "eligible voters." They never followed the criteria of the Constitution. Concern about checks and balances, and lack of ability to challenge the elections.
- The Enrollment Departments don't always work with the MCT to update information. Our voice lives in the Enrollment Department! Recommends to let everyone correct and update their addresses and submit death certificates.
- The Drafting Committee has made a draft of an interim council that has checks and balances already built in it. They have also written an Election Ordinance which TEC members haven't seen. There currently isn't one except for candidates. The Drafting Committee wants to amend the current Secretarial Election process to remove Secretary of Interior from it and put in "Tribal Elections". This will have the checks, balances and appeal information in it. Once approved, the Drafting Committee will give this to Phil to bring to the TEC.

Discussion: Self-Determination/Alliance Document discussion. (Carol J.)

Izhitwaawin V – Self Determination. It's not just about funding and grants. It stems from international law. Resources are listed. Document was reviewed for changes and clarity.

Model 1 feedback from June 24, 2025 MCT Delegate meeting. (Mykee Brown)

- Reviewing Model 2. Proposed language for an Umbrella Constitution as compared to the IRA Constitution. Review and changes.

Discussion: Ad-hoc Committee (Phil Brodeen 8/2024) Phil stated that when the Ad-Hoc committee's work is to write the election ordinance, and this committee is complete they no longer need the Constitution Delegation. Phil had one meeting with the Delegates, and now the TEC is done with having delegates on the AD-Hoc Committee. TEC authorized Phil to meet with delegates one time. Review of the Phil Brodeen Memorandum. The 12 person TEC is not representative of all of the MCT members. A delegate has stated that she has never been

asked by an RBC about any issue. They should not be making decisions without talking to the members. Add this Ad-Hoc discussion to individual Reservation Delegate meetings.

- Recommendation that the Delegates come up with their own Robert Rules of Order so there is an order in our Delegate meetings. The Drafting Committee has written a lot about ethics.

Subcommittee Updates:

1. Finance: Has not met in 3 months. We need to confirm that the MCT still has the \$100,000 set aside for the Delegation. Also need to follow up on the Bush Grant. This got to be such a hard job when the Delegates do not support their hard work. This subcommittee is currently closed, because subcommittee members are responsible for funding. It was recommended that this subcommittee be open to the others to sit in and listen, but no vote.
2. TEC: Has not met in months.
3. Facilitation: meets one week after convention. They make up the agendas for meetings.
4. Drafting: Meets every Tuesday and is doing good work.
5. Education: Has not met in 2 + months.

- Note: Cheryl is sending out new information on a Project Management document. Please review this. We all need to be more supportive of the work our committees do!
- It was recommended that all subcommittees should be open and transparent, allowing all who wish to attend.
- Any Subcommittee member can send out zoom invitations.
- Subcommittees need dedication and commitment.

Open Discussion/Audience questions:

- Sandy Lake does not believe in division. There has been a lot of discussion on division here.
- Every Reservation has a tribal paper to educate everyone.
- Enrollments: We all call ourselves Ojibwe, what does that mean? When you claim to be Ojibwe, what does that really mean? When do people start talking about excluding descendants? Who among us really knows all the language, culture and history.
- White Earth is seeking another District 1 Delegate. Accepting nominations until August 31, with voting at the Rice Lake Community Center at Rice opening.
- W.E. Community education meeting August 20 at Shooting Star Event Center. A social gathering prior to the meal, conversation and input on issues.
- Review of FDL Constitution website listing important information.
- Facebook: White Earth Constitution Reform Facebook will be added to the FDL website.
- It was suggested that volunteer hours be tracked per reservation and for the Delegate conventions. At \$28 per hour this is a lot of volunteer hours.

- Wally Storbakken suggested that an “Alliance” be used instead of a “Constitution”. Since then, Reservations have decided to write their own constitutions.
- The Secretary of Interior wants to be removed from the Constitution, and it has been suggested to remove them. White Mountain Apache is being investigated for an incident and nothing has been done in this issue. Carol investigated. Other tribes have done this, we won’t lose our federal recognition, and we will operate our own government as we have done before. We do not need to have the Secretary of Interior in our affairs.

Adjournment. 2:31 pm

Fond Du Lac is hosting the August 15, 2025, Constitution Reform Convention