

MCT Constitution Reform Convention

January 21, 2022 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

HOSTED BY WHITE EARTH NATION

Rough Draft/Notes for Minutes

Attendees (35): Jacob McArthur WE, Sandra Borden GP, Donovan Dahmen GP, Joy Annette WE Facilitator, Dawn Paro-Strother GP, Wally LL, Maureen Jones, Jolyn WE, Patty Straub, Birdie Roberts MLB, Michael Gilgosch, Raymond Bellcourt, John Roterman FDL, Michael Smith Jr. LL, Mike Davis MLB, Cheryl Edwards FDL, Michele Hakal-Beeksma GP, Sybil Gund, Faith Ahlgreen, Carol Janek (Sp?) FDL, Joyn Donnell WE, Patty Straub WE, Char Ellis WE, Nookomis Debra, Dr Giniwgiizhig, Jason Burnett GP, Danielle Smith, Pam Fairbanks, Sally Fineday LL, Walter Reese, Faith Ahlgreen, Perry Skinaway MLB, Jolyn Donnell WE, Water Reese, Danielle Smith, Janis Fairbanks, Chris Dickinson, Awaniikwe Nagajiiwanang, @nGeL WED1, Michaa Aubid, Minisinaakwaang, Maggie Rousu WE, Tracey Dagen BF

9:00 am Welcome by Joy Annette Facilitator

9:05am Invocation by Ray Bellcourt WE

Roll Call: absent Bois Forte (joined later in the meeting)

9:10 am Education Subcommittee presentation, Rights of Nature. Joy Annette read a definition of the Rights of Nature and the importance of the environment and our responsibility as the custodian of nature. [Add the link or file of Joy's presentation.] There was a discussion on whether the Rights of Nature should be part of our constitution and there was no disagreement to including the Rights of Nature.

John Roterman, a member of the Education Subcommittee, brought up the lack of attendance at meetings. For example, he was concerned that the agenda for this meeting was sent out late. He clarified that the RBCs are the Reservation "Business" Committees, not our governance councils.

Ray Bellcourt agrees with the need for a Grand Council, the Youth Council,

Wally read a historical document (Nelson Act) that stated that Ojibwe never had a tribe/nation; we had individual sovereignty. Wally stated that we were unnaturally put under a constitution. What word should we use for us: Federation, Alliance,... Our practice was never to force another to do something. [Decision making] it is up to the local and individual.

Joy Annette- the white men who wrote the Nelson Act wrote from their perception and does not represent our culture. The Whites separated us into Tribes/Bands. We need to be one Tribe again.

John Roterman in chat- We have an unwritten constitution. Oral tradition.

Michaa Aubid- Had some student senior high guests.

Dr. Henry Giniwgiizhig- Rights of Nature are very important, because they are what separates us from the Whites, Europeans. We have a spiritual relation with nature and that relationship should be in our Constitution(s).

Birdie Roberts- made an explanation of how difficult it was to do the facilitation for meeting (e.g., volunteers whose work have to be accommodated).

Joy- Where in the Constitution should be "Rights of Nature"? and what should be said about it.

John Roterman – There are some precedence that we can use. For example, a tribe that is fighting for and has a court case for the rights of salmon. Perhaps we could concentrate on suing those who are damaging nature. We should begin with our Creation Story.

Drafting Committee: Marcie McIntire, Patti Straub, Marcie McIntire, Giniwgiizhig, John Roterman, Michaa Aubid, Wally S., Raymond, Frank Reese LL, Al Olson, Michele Palomaki, Jean Skinaway-Lawrence SLB, Mattie Decarlo or Millie Holmes for Bois Forte. The Drafting committee accepts ideas and drafts the words for the Constitution. January 24th 6 pm is the next Drafting committee via Zoom. **Cheryl Edwards will send out the Zoom info. We need a Bois Fort member.**

Joy: Our task is to write a constitution for the entire Tribe/Anishinaabe Nation. Do we want a Colonial approach or a native approach?

Cheryl: We are waiting on White Earth's vote on whether non delegates may be on committees.

Joy asked **Cheryl to send the words for the vote.**

Note Janis Fairbanks FDL in the chat wrote: Giniwgiizhig, that's the truth! I was also a delegate and stepped away a couple years ago. Now as a non-delegate, I am being prevented from joining committees. I hold a doctorate in Native American history, language and literature in the Great Lakes Ojibwe. I think willing community members should be allowed to serve on committees. Miigwech!

Two possible ways to describe us:

Aanishinaabe Inokwonagewin(Inaakonigewin) discussion or plan

maamawiino-mazina'igan (come together on paper)

Birdie- believes the MCT is an organization.

Sally- LL believes the MCT is an organization.

Maggie Rousu WE- as a new member, how far are we in this process? There are still conflicting views.

Giniwgiizhig WE- we should be concerned with the problems with the current Constitution. The main problem is that the Constitution is top down and allows absolute power. We lose power if we disband. We have always had a Grand Council. What is the problem, what is better? Do we want to be unified or not? Let's not worry about semantics. Stick to the task at hand.

Raymond- What is wrong with the Constitution? It was created by the Federal government and the RBC are 5 members who work behind close doors and are not representative government. The power must be taken back from the RBCs and the TEC.

Birdie- ML has a game plan and will roll it out in March/April to their community.

Giniwgiizhig WE- Where are the documents; eg, Nelson Act, minutes? Can we centralize the information? He quoted John Morrin Grand Portage , “the power is in the people.”

Cheryl: All the documents are on www.fdl.constitution.org

Joy: White Earth is working on a web page.

Ray- A good leader is one who is not standing in front of people, but who is standing behind his people.

Patty Staub- White Earth has a model constitution (1998). Maybe the Drafting committee could look at.

Joy- We also need to look at the 7 Grandfather teachings.

10:30 am Break

10:45 am Reconvened

Sandra Borden introduced Dawn Paro-Strother, a new delegate from Grand Portage.

Giniwgiizhig WE- told an Indian Time story. The punch line was that Indian Time was to get there early.

Tammy Skinaway- She wants “Lateral Violence” to be on next month’s agenda. She is also looking for funding. Perhaps it could wait until April and allow us to gather information.

Michele Hakala-Beeksma GP- spoke on the number of delegates per band. Grand Portage is actively recruiting. She is concerned about any restriction on the band by a rule that there needs to be 10 delegates.

Joy- Looking at minutes from 2018 of a meeting at Fond du Lac where it was decided that we should have 10 delegates per band.

Giniwgiizhig- If you don’t have 10 delegates, it is no one’s business.

Cheryl- The minutes states a “maximum number of 10”, not a “minimum number”. A number was needed for a BIA grant which was never done.

Sally- We are volunteers and it does not matter how many delegates.

Birdie- MLB has been able to get 10 members and have no recommendations.

Michele in chat- The discussion at that meeting included a suggestion to have the number of delegates be per capita.

Char- WE does not allow descendants be participants. We have enough volunteers that we don't need descendents (to meet our 10 delegates).

Jason Burnett Grand Portage- We only have 7 or 8 delegates and have a hard time putting people on committees. We started off only allowing delegates who live on the reservation. We only have about 400 band members who live on the reservation; therefore we opened up the delegation to members who live off reservation.

Joy- When there are few delegates, it is a burden to have the delegates attend all the meetings.

Jason- It is especially hard for working members.

Jolyn Donnell- it was a solid 10 people from each of the 6 reservations.

Tammy Skinaway in chat: <https://www.haudenosauneeconfederacy.com/who-we-are/>

Jason- Have we agreed on the format of the Constitution, for example, keep the same articles or start with a blank sheet? What are the most important items? In Grand Portage we are concern with two items: membership and government structure. He suggested taking one item and pushing it through.

Joy: There has been no agreement. I would like us to take an item and push it through.

Raymond Bellcourt- nothing gets done under the Constitution and we need to take back the power.

Wally Storbakken in chat: How about we make a new document and call it "A Declaration of Alliance of Anishinabe in Minnesota" and declare that the Alliance is an organization created through the IRA? (Meant to explain that the MCT was created by the IRA).

Raymond- we should not tie ourself to the IRA or any government

Birdie- We have the ability to establish via a treaty amongst ourselves to establish an alliance.

Joy – we should start with why we are doing this and define who we are including the Rights of Nature.

Jason- we got input from 6 bands on the Preamble. Marcie McIntire championed it and worked on the it. Jason has researched Native American constitution; they varied from 12 pages to over 100 pages.

Joy - We are sovereign but we are together.

Cheryl- We had set the Preamble aside until the document is written.

Ray: What did our ancestors call ourselves. I am sure that they did not call themselves government.

Sally- we use to call ourselves the Three Fires (alliance of three tribes).

Michaa in chat- "Dibeninendizowin

Sovereignty one way to say or think it from nib

In your thoughts you own yourself

Or your own free thinking”

Joy- We have a blank slate, the drafting committee will work on the preamble.

Michael Smith Jr LL in chat- I resign from the Education Committee.

Jolen Jones in chat- EMAIL- jjones@NACDI.org. PHONE 612-979-3459 She has a data base that can help with communications.

12:15 noon Lunch

1:15 pm Committee Reports

- TEC Committee – Referendum, Vote by tribe: There is a TEC meeting next Friday and we need to discuss our unified voice. Where are we at? We had recommended some wording.
Cheryl in chat: “Therefore be it resolved, that MCT TEC does hereby authorize a referendum to be conducted on the following question:
Should Article II of the Revised Constitution and Bylaws of the Minnesota Chippewa Tribe be amended through a Secretarial Election to remove the current membership requirements, including the one quarter blood degree requirement, and replace such membership requirements with authorization to the individual Bands to establish Band specific membership requirements through Resolution or Ordinance.

Delegate Recommendations:

Question 1 Should the Secretarial Election requirement be removed from the current MCT Constitution?

Question 2 Remove Blood quantum requirement from our current MCT Constitution membership requirements.

Question 3 Authorize the six-member reservations of the Minnesota Chippewa Tribe to discuss and determine membership and by a vote of the eligible citizens to make their own membership requirements.

Authorize the six-member reservations of the MCT to make their own membership”

Cheryl – We can use the Referendum to start the Education process and let people know that there is a vote coming up.

Char Ellis- Why can't we wait? We still need to reach 17,000 people.

Sally- Why does White Earth not want to go out with the Referendum? It already has been 3 years. Leech Lake wants the Referendum. Let's **meet before the TEC meeting, next Thursday night. We will do a Zoom call.**

- Finance Committee – Sally, We haven't met.

- Education Committee- Birdie, we rotate who handles the tasks for the month. We had one meeting where we talked about the rights of nature.
- Survey Committee report by Awaniikwe Nagaiwanong (FDL Debra). The survey was presented and the Education Committee was asked to produce a one page introduction. Cheryl- There are now eight questions. We need an education portion to go with it. It needs to be concise to fit two pages. Michele presented the edits by the Grand Portage. Cheryl edited the document to include the comments. Carol Janick on question #8 “approve” and “review.” Federal Law says that the Federal government must “approve” certain items such as liquor laws; the Secretary of Interior has no authority to review.
- Drafting Committee- no report. Their **task is to start on the “Rights of Nature.”**

2:15 pm Break

2:20 pm **Drafting meeting January 26th 6 pm.**

Jason- how many of our members have access to Internet? Joy- White Earth has a lot of communication/cell dead zones. Cheryl- there is no way to verify an on-line survey. How do you assume that they are enrolled members? Sandra brought up how to use a monkey survey by providing instructions on how to do an on-line survey on the paper survey because we have the mail addresses, not the internet addresses. Cheryl- Gary (at MCT) is ready for the survey and the money is available, \$16,000. We need to get it out. Wally- the survey is not binding; we are testing the temperature. The Secretarial election will be final; only entitled members are able to vote. Joy- are we including 16- and 17-year old members in the survey who will become able to vote?

2:45 pm Next Zoom meeting date **February 18th, Fond du Lac is host** and responsible for meeting minutes

Cheryl has sent out a proposed the list of meeting dates and hosts. **Next Survey committee meeting is February 11 at 6 pm via Zoom. Cheryl will send the Zoom information.**

2:51 pm Adjourn