

Amended MCT Constitution Reform Convention

Minutes June 24, 2025

Hosted by Leech Lake at Leech Lake Twin Cities Office and on Zoom

IN-PERSON ATTENDEES:

FDL: Cheryl E. FDL; **WE:** Patty S., Sybil G., Chris V., Emily A., Fawn Roy. **LL:** Aleigha F., Marilyn W., Davis D., Shavon T., Avis P., Peggy W., Opalina P., Shirley J., Sally F., Aaron F.-V., Delores F., Debra S., Lucille H., Imma H., Christina B., Christian A., **S.L./W.E.:** Tammy S.; **GP:** Marcie M.

ZOOM ATTENDEES:

FDL: Carol J., Deb T.; **WE:** Jolyn D., Louie J., Mykee B., Anthony G.; **LL:** Michael S. Jr., Patty Smith; **MLB:** Birdie R., Michele P.; **GP:** Michele B., Sandra B.

WELCOME and INVOCATION: Sally Fineday conducted the welcome and the prayer.

ICE BREAKER ACTIVITY: Tell us what you like about your reservation.

SECRETARIAL ELECTION LANGUAGE:

- Each band was asked to write one question, then take all the thoughts and put them into one suggested question for a Secretarial election based on the following two questions on the 2022 Referendum:

1. Should the blood quantum requirement be removed from the membership requirements of the Minnesota Chippewa Tribe?
2. Should the six-member reservations [Bands] of the Minnesota Chippewa Tribe be authorized to determine their membership requirements by Band Ordinance?

- FDL's suggested language: "Shall the Minnesota Chippewa Tribe amend its membership criteria to replace the requirement of one-quarter (¼) Minnesota Chippewa Indian Blood with lineal descent from an original enrollee or descendant listed on the April 14, 1941 roll of the Minnesota Chippewa Tribe?"
- TEC asked for language at the last TEC meeting. The discussion centered around several issues. First, there was confusion as to what the actual assignment was. Some thought it was about the removal of the Secretary of the Interior from Article XII. The confusion stems from the fact that the TEC and the delegation are also dealing with several other issues. The 2022 Referendum, the Removal of the Secretary, and lineal descent replacing blood quantum. Some are still questioning the resolution 32-15.

- There was a concern that if FDL's question were put forth, would there be any members who would lose their membership, using the June 14, 1941, roll? If we put lineal descent forward for an election, we have one chance, and we have a threshold of 30% to reach
- Discussed membership criteria for the Minnesota Chippewa Tribe, with delegates debating various aspects of enrollment processes and blood quantum requirements.
- The Leech Lake delegate reported that they have already developed the language for the referendum questions and will not revise it again. Leech Lake also stated that they wanted the language of June 14, 1941, removed from FDL's question. They also noted that they agree that the Secretary of the Interior should be removed from the Revised Constitution.
- The question that followed was, "Are you going to use the 1941 roll or use some other method of lineal descent?"
- It was pointed out that we are still operating under the current constitution, and TEC ignored the referendum. Now, they are asking for a question for the Secretarial election, and we should be prepared to write it.
- The delegation discussed that once the current constitution is revoked and we have our local constitutions, the criteria for citizenship will be addressed at the band level.
- Louis suggested that the question is not complete to answer the question on the referendum vote. He added that the Minnesota Chippewa Tribe should amend its membership criteria to replace the requirement of one-quarter Minnesota Chippewa Indian Blood. With lineal descent from the original and royalties or descendants listed on April 14, 1941, the rules of the Minnesota Chippewa Tribe, or disband and let each reservation make its own decision. Following Louis's comments, a lengthy discussion ensued about how the bands handled their enrollments.
- The delegation was reminded that TEC is currently asking us to work on changing the current Revised Constitution, not on issues related to constitutional reform or local constitutions.
- White Earth wants the lineal descent language out of the question. Noting that it is up to the separate Reservations to determine enrollment. They have decided to present four different options for membership enrollment.
- One concern was that if the criteria were addressed in a band ordinance, it would be too easy to change.
- One delegate suggested combining the two questions and leaving out the language of lineal descent. "Citizens across all six Bands who have a majority vote, requested that the one-quarter Chippewa Indian blood, which is blood quantum, be removed."
- It was mentioned that this is the next step to move forward with the referendum; the Secretary will only take one question. This referendum is binding on TEC to take that next step.

- At the last delegation meeting, it was decided to email these suggestions to the drafting committee. The delegates were instructed again to put their suggestions in writing and send them to the drafting committee.
- Sally asked if all the discussions could be compiled into one sheet, so that when we attend the TEC meeting, each of us has a copy of what was discussed before the quarterly meeting.
- Carol offered to write the meeting minutes but asked the delegates to submit one question to the drafting committee. (It is those questions that will be put on one sheet of paper.)
- Marcie M of the Drafting Committee noted that there has been a breakdown in communication during this meeting. She said that when the drafting committee was first established in February 2020, the idea was that six reservations would instruct the drafting committee to do the writing.

MODEL # 1

Carol J. noted that Model #1 was handed out at the last convention. Today, the Drafting Committee will address questions, suggested changes, and opinions on the proposed language. The discussion is limited to the right side of the document: UMBRELLA CONSTITUTION.

- It will replace the IRA Revised Constitution and Bylaws of the Minnesota Chippewa Tribe.
- It will be an umbrella document intended to keep the Six Nations interconnected.
- It outlines the purpose.
- The six reservations will have their Local Constitutions.
- It has articles, unlike the Alliance document, which has IZHITWAAWIN as sections.
- It acknowledges that each band has the authority to do the following:

Each of the six nations shall have the authority in its local constitution to decide its governing structure, develop its policies, laws, and implementation, and who or what interprets its laws.

Each Minnesota Chippewa Nation shall have the authority in its local constitutions to determine its citizenship criteria, develop its policies and procedures, establish an appeal process, and establish the timeline for implementing its enrollment process.

Each nation shall have the authority in its local constitution to conduct tribal elections for candidates to fill governing bodies, according to its election laws.

Each nation shall have the authority in its local constitution to decide its tribal governing structure.

Each nation shall have the authority in its local constitution to decide its Business structure.

Each nation shall have the authority in its local constitution to decide how its tribal officials will be bonded.

Each nation shall have the authority in its local constitution to decide its policies and procedures for removing officers and filling vacancies, and define the causes for removal. (It was suggested that the Code of Conduct, Ethics, and Conflict of Interest document drafted by the Drafting Committee would be helpful as a guide.)

Each nation shall have the authority, according to its Tribal Election Law, to amend its local constitution.

Each nation shall have the authority in its local constitution to determine its citizens' rights and to implement them accordingly. (Review the civil rights under the U.S. Constitution and the Indian Civil Rights Act. Some Tribal Nations draft their own.)

Each nation shall have the authority in its local constitution to determine how it reviews resolutions, ordinances, and other tribal laws.

Uniform Tribal Elections are elections held for the citizens of the Six Nations.

These elections will be used to ratify, amend, or revoke the Umbrella Constitution, or to change its duration.

Each nation shall have the authority in its local constitution to determine its referendum policies and procedures.

Each nation will be free to develop policies and procedures and implement additional Articles in its Local Constitution, including, but not limited to, the following:

- Judiciary
- Ethical Responsibilities of Officials
- Resolutions and Ordinances
- Petitions

- Citizen Councils
- Traditional Dispute Resolution

This Umbrella Constitution endorses and incorporates the Alliance document.

Duration of the Umbrella Constitution

- The duration of this Umbrella Constitution shall be perpetual or may be revoked in a Uniform Tribal Election of citizens of the Six Nations.
- The majority vote shall rule in Uniform Tribal Elections under this Umbrella Constitution.
- This Umbrella Constitution may be amended or revoked by a majority vote of the voters of the six nations at a uniform tribal election called for that purpose.
 - o Oversight liaison
 - o Legal Counsel
 - o Panel of Judges
 - o Alliance and within it is the UNDRIP
- General Comments From The Delegation
 - o Mykee noted that, with a few minor adjustments, she likes the model, mainly because a working document with good potential still exists.
 - o Sally liked the preamble and the purpose statement. She thought the document provided a good explanation, and she liked the explanation of the governing body.
 - o One suggestion was to have a referendum on both models to give options. Another response was that we, as delegates, represent the citizens and bring back their concerns, then we make recommendations to the larger group for a vote.
 - o Carol stated that if this model is not used, it can serve as an educational guide for drafting the local constitutions.
- Role of The Whole Delegation - Marcie stated that the Drafting Committee would like to have the priorities from the delegation. We prefer the truth. Take the document back and respond with a simple "yes," "no," or "I like this," or "I don't like that."

- MCT's Status
 - o MLB's position is that since the MCT is only an organization, tribal enrollment should not be part of the MCT Constitution. It should only be included in each band's constitution. The MCT constitution only states membership within the MCT. Individual criteria are defined under the individual band constitutions only. It is a really important statement for us all to pay attention to as we move forward.

LIVE EDIT OF THE ALLIANCE TREATY AGREEMENT

Michael S. Jr. presented the Alliance document for review and live editing. He explains its purpose to strengthen Anishinaabe unity and relationships through sovereignty and cultural revitalization. He read each IZHITWAAWIN and then opened it up for the delegates to discuss and make any necessary changes to the wording.

- IZHITWAAWIN I- PURPOSE OF THE ALLIANCE TREATY AGREEMENT
 - o No Comments or changes in language.
- IZHITWAAWIN II - PARTIES TO THE ALLIANCE TREATY AGREEMENT
 - o Add "Non-removable" before Mille Lacs.
- IZHITWAAWIN III – INCLUSION
 - o Correct spelling of Anishinaabe.
 - o Discussion: Anthony G. questioned the addition of other tribes and the inclusion of more members. Anthony put his email address in the Chat. He requested a copy of the Alliance be sent to him.
 - o Michael explained that IZHITWAAWIN II includes all those active at the table and the active members. Here, we want all of our Ojibwe people to come together and support one another on specific issues; it doesn't mean they will be part of our local constitutions or citizenship. The purpose of inclusion is to strengthen our political, social, and economic power.
 - o Carol J. invited Anthony to the Drafting Committee, where his questions can be answered.
- IZHITWAAWIN IV - DECLARATION OF SOVEREIGNTY AND SOVEREIGN RIGHTS

o Michael pointed out that this means we won't sign on to something that conflicts with our beliefs outlined here. This gives us protection, so we don't have to be compelled to sign on to something.

o No other comments noted.

- IZHITWAAWIN V - SELF DETERMINATION

o Comments

- Marcie M. suggested adding "sustainable" before "economic development" in the first line. She also suggested that the wording "These federal funds should have goals and objectives congruent with our Anishinaabe values" should follow the word "treaties" in line 6.

- Anthony suggested that the word State be added so it says "state and federal..." in line 5.

- Michele B. suggested that all language related to fiscal policies and financial issues be addressed at the band level and not included in the alliance document.

- Michael and Michele both indicated that self-determination is much more than money and grants. As sovereign nations, we have the right to govern ourselves and follow our cultural traditions.

- Carol said the Drafting Committee will look at the other issues of self-determination.

IZHITWAAWIN VI - EXTERNAL GOVERNMENTAL RELATIONSHIPS

o Section 3. There was a question about what this means, and one person said it was hard to understand.

- Michael explained that we still hold all the treaties as they were originally signed. We support the treaties. All those Chippewa bands that originally signed the treaties. We're not just talking about one specific treaty, but all the treaties and the rights they encompass.

- Michael also said that if we don't spell it out and endorse these, they could come back to us and say, ' Well, they don't even acknowledge their treaties, why should we have to? ' And then there we go, we're losing treaty rights. So it's more of a safety buffer.

o Sally F. suggested that we use the word "asserts."

- IZHITWAAWIN VII – CULTURE

o Michael noted that this protects those practices. It was a guardrail. If it's not outlined, it's difficult to say this is important to us..

o Carol noted that one of the things we need to do is continue to be relevant throughout our generations by having our uniqueness identified.

- o No comments on the language change.

- IZHITWAAWIN VIII- EDUCATION

- o There were no comments about language change.

- o Anthony expressed his concern that this does not describe us with more clarity, but it seems like it's putting us into a bigger bubble and under the United Nations.

- Michael responded that we're talking about who we are as Anishinaabe people. To ensure the government understands and accepts this information, it needs to be presented clearly and concisely. We're trying to give ourselves enough wiggle room with this broad context. So, you're right; it's a bubble, but it's a big enough bubble that hopefully we have some wiggle room to be ourselves. While still maintaining a shape that's acceptable to the government. It's a safety bubble, and hopefully it's big enough that we can retain our individuality.

- IZHITWAAWIN IX - RIGHTS OF CITIZENS

- o Michael noted that the whole language of UNDRIP was moved to an appendix.

- o No further comments or suggested language changes.

- IZHITWAAWIN X- RIGHTS OF CHILDREN

- o A suggestion was made to remove the words "If possible "in the middle of the paragraph.

- IZHITWAAWIN XI- TREATY AND RESERVED RIGHTS

- o No comments or suggested language changes.

- IZHITWAAWIN XII- RIGHTS OF NATURE

- o One suggestion was to remove the last sentence.

- IZHITWAAWIN XIII- AMENDMENTS

- o One person commented that she agreed that a simple majority of the nation's voters is needed to amend the document.

QUESTION PRESENTED TO THE MILLE LAC DELEGATION

- Carol asked Birdie R. of the Mille Lac Band (MLB) about their statement in a letter to the TEC that the Alliance document was not viable and asked if she could provide some insight into that opinion. Furthermore, she wondered if this line-by-line task had helped to improve your concept.

- Birdie noted that there have been improvements. The original idea was confusing about the MCT Constitution and the Alliance. MLB felt you can't have both. Birdie questioned what would happen with the MCT Constitution. She stated that the plan now is to replace it with the Alliance, which is what Mille Lac was leaning towards. Birdie noted that they were never against the Alliance; we're against the fact that there were going to be two separate documents and different organizations. As far as the MCT Constitution goes, we stand on the position that it's an organization. Therefore, anything and everything that falls under a tribe's sovereignty and is governmental should not be included in the Alliance. So their solution was not to address the Alliance until a decision was made about the MCT and its constitution.

CHAT FILE:

GP Sandra Borden: How many people are at the meeting in person (since we on Zoom can not see them)?

FDL Delegate: 17

GP Sandra Borden: We can see the speaker if they stand near the computer.

Patty Smith: Did I miss the prayer opening?

GP Sandra Borden: You missed the Ice Breaker: what do you like about your reservation.

GP Sandra Borden: Cheryl, we cannot hear what is going on. Are you on break?

Jolyn Donnell: Anthony Gordon, please contact me at 218 368 4329. Thank you.

Mykee: Shall the MCT amend our membership requirements to remove blood quantum and allow each band to determine their own enrollment criteria for enrollment?

MLB - Birdie: MLB's position is since the MCT is only an organization tribal enrollments should not be part of the MCT Constitution; it should only be included in each Bands Constitution. "Should the MCT constitution only state membership within the MCT identified by Tribe/Band; not individual criteria? Individual criteria is defined through the individual Band constitutions only.

NEXT STEPS:

- Drafting Committee: Complete both constitutional model drafts for future presentation to the membership

- All Delegations: Take the Model #1 document back to their delegation meetings for review and provide feedback on each section
- Delegation Members: Connect with their Tribal Executive Committee members to communicate their positions on constitutional changes
- Carol Janik: Create meeting minutes including all comments and the chat discussion regarding the Secretarial election question
- Sally: Write down and submit the Leech Lake delegation's two statements regarding not rewriting the referendum sentence and agreement to remove the Secretary of the Interior from current revised constitution
- Leech Lake Delegation: Review and mark up the Model #1 umbrella constitution document at next Tuesday's delegation meeting
- Mykee: Attend next week's drafting committee meeting to explain suggested adjustments to Model # 1
- All Delegates: Submit their proposed Secretarial election question language to the drafting committee via email

NEXT CONVENTION: July 18, 2025, at White Earth