



Letter to Atikameksheng Anishnawbek From Gimaa and Council On the Anishnawbek Nation Governance Agreement (ANGA)

Aanii Kina Wiya!

We are aware that there has been numerous meetings and presentations on the ANGA in our community, but these were not well attended. We state this not to criticize but to recognize that not everyone wants to or is able to sit in a meeting.

Gimaa and Council have been asked by many of our citizens on our position on the ANGA so we decided that we should write a letter to you. This letter is intended for our citizens only. We have weighed the pros and cons and believe that supporting the ANGA is in the best interests of our community. We also acknowledge that there is a lot of false information about the ANGA.

Here are just a few reasons why we are supporting the ANGA:

- There is nothing in this agreement that extinguishes our sovereignty, our right to self-government or our Aboriginal and treaty rights. In fact, this agreement gets us out of the Indian Act in some key areas such as (citizenship, governance and elections) which we think is a good thing. The remainder of what we are doing is not touched by this agreement. The more we move away from the paternalistic approaches of the Indian Act, the better. This also means that we will develop our own laws in these areas. These laws will be developed and voted on by us alone. We do not need anyone else's approval for this.
- We are not giving any of our rights away to the Union of Ontario Indians. In fact, it is those First Nations who say yes that will decide what a new central government looks like. And we want to be on the ground floor to help build and shape this central government.
- Our First Nation is working hard and we have a dedicated team but we could use help. It would be great to come together with other First Nations to work cooperatively and form a central government to support us. Already we make calls and reach out when needed to other First Nations to share best practices but we are short-staffed and under-funded and it is hard to make progress. We want to move away from the *Indian Act*. However, at the rate we are currently moving, it will take us along time. Many of our neighbouring First Nations are moving in the same direction so it is about time for us to work together. Those First Nations who say yes to the agreement will form a central government.
- We will have 7 times the budget we currently have to run our government, and this is guaranteed over the next 5 years. We also will not fall below this amount when we re-



negotiate in 5 years' time. There is also a moratorium on the application of Own Source Revenues (OSR). This is better than what we currently have as right now we are using OSR to fund our government operations. And this gives us assurance. Budgets are constantly being cut and in many cases, no notice is even provided. First Nations who are not in this agreement have no assurances or protections that they will not be forced to use their OSR and are at the whim of the government.

- We have some experience entering into this type of agreement because we have done it once already under education and it has worked out as we thought it would and according to the agreement that was signed. For the first time in years we were able to give our students a raise in their funding allowances and fund more students.

We don't have a crystal ball and we don't know what will happen in the future, but we believe that this agreement is better than what we currently have. We want to move away from the Indian Act and its paternalistic control over us and our community. The Department of Indigenous Services Canada has no business interfering in our affairs. Those days should have been over long ago.

Instead, we want to move forward and we are excited about the possibility of forming a central government of First Nations who also want to work together. We hope you will do your due diligence too and not believe the false rhetoric that is being spread. Be very careful to consider sources on social media and consider the motivations of those who post. Instead read the agreements, check the website www.governancevote.ca and if you need any further information, please feel free to reach out and talk to us. We are happy to communicate with you by home visit, phone call or emails. In addition, you can contact communications@wfn.com or Whitney Nootchtaï to set up an appointment with Gimaa or Council.

Miigwech,

Gimaa and Council

"Sometimes I think of Tecumseh, and how he had a great vision to unite our peoples into one confederacy. He was not successful, and sometimes it is hard not to wonder what might have been, what could have been, had Tecumseh realized his vision. Our great, great, great grandfather Shawanekezhik fought alongside him. He stood by him.

Why are we sometimes so afraid to work with our own people? We have common goals, let's work together where we can, and on our own when it is called for. Let's use these tools to achieve our ultimate goals. Together, let's be the best Anishinaabe we can be."

-Atikameksheng Anishnawbek citizen