



# **E-DBENDAAAGZIJIG**

*“Citizenship as a Catalyst for Nation Building”*

**Anishinabek Nation**  
**Commissioner on Citizenship**  
**Jeannette Corbiere Lavell**

# Anishinabek Nation Today

- Comprised of thirty-nine (39) First Nations
- Represents approximately 55,000 Anishinaabe people
- Four regions: Northern Superior; Lake Huron; Southeast; and Southwest regions
- Chiefs in Assembly are the Anishinabek Nation Grand Council which mandates the Union of Ontario Indians
- The UOI is the secretariat and advocate for the Anishinabek Nation – [www.anishinabek.ca](http://www.anishinabek.ca)



# **Anishinabek Nation Vision**

- To build a self-governing Anishinabek Nation by maintaining our inherent aboriginal and treaty rights and improving the quality of life for the Anishinabek people.
- To create processes that can give Anishinabek Nation communities hope for the future, while maintaining the traditions of the past.
- The development of an Anishinabek Nation Law on Citizenship is a good example.
- This must be a community-driven process.

Only our traditional governments have the right to define our citizenry and criteria for citizenship for our communities and within our Nation. We reject the Indian Act in its attempt to legislate and define who an Anishinabek citizen is, and as such, we reject the concept of Indian Status.

# **Anishinabek Nation Grand Council Resolution 2007/03**

- WE will determine who our citizens are.
- A similar resolution was passed at the national level, at the Assembly of First Nations, Dec. '07
- This is a fundamental issue at the core of who we are as a Nation of People with constitutionally protected Aboriginal and Treaty rights, including the inherent right of self-government and the human right of self-determination for indigenous peoples.

# The Sessions

- E-Dbendaagzijig Conference, May 27, 28, 2009
- Kettle & Stony Point First Nation, Oct. 28, 2008
- Red Rock Indian Band, Dec. 2, 2008
- Thunder Bay Friendship Centre, Dec. 3, 2008
- M'Chigeeng First Nation, Jan. 20, 2009
- N'Swakamok Friendship Centre, Sudbury, Jan. 21, 2009
- Garden River First Nation, Jan. 27, 2009



# The Sessions

- UOI head office staff, Feb. 6, 2009
- Aamjiwnaang First Nation, Feb. 9, 2009
- N' Amerind Friendship Centre, London, Feb. 10, 2009
- Native Canadian Centre, Toronto, Feb. 24, 2009
- Rama First Nation, Feb. 25, 2009 (largest turn-out - over 60)
- Nation Building Councils: Elders, Women & Youth, March 30, 2009





# The Sessions

- N’Bsiing Secondary School, April 1, 2009
- Amikook Senior’s Centre, April 7, 2009
- E-Dbendaagzijig Conference, April 21-22, 2009
- Manitoulin Secondary School, May 14, 2009
- Anishinabekwek Council, June 1-3, 2009



**18 sessions in 4 Regions**  
**2 Nation-level conferences**  
**over 400 participants**



# What I heard:

- Utilize the One Parent rule to determine citizens.
- Need the Anishinaabe Language for our culture and spirituality and who we are as a People.
- Incorporate our Treaties to help explain the history of our ancestors who determined “who belongs”.



# What I heard:

- Keep Canada responsible. Canada must recognize our citizens and our right to determine our citizens.
- Good to see our leaders now understand what is happening. I think they didn't foresee the decline.
- Listen to those who need to belong. Some First Nations do not want to accept you.



# What I heard:

- The issue is Citizenship, not membership, Nations have citizenship and social groups have members.
- Nations have land, own government, culture, language and spirituality.
- We cannot be fooled into a discussion on membership



# What I heard:

- Need a template for First Nations to follow. Rules can change with each First Nation election.
- Need strong Chiefs and Councils to follow and push for what grassroots people are saying.
- Future plans to include strategies on increasing benefits and implementing cultural practices for becoming and being a citizen.



# Criteria: The One-Parent Rule

- The “One-Parent Rule” was accepted overall as being the only way to ensure that we continue to exist and that we protect the lands that we now occupy.
- Descendancy – top secondary criteria, directly related to the One-Parent Rule, but with a cut-off.



# Cultural Criteria

*“We need to re-establish language, culture and identity.”*

- Our Grandfathers’ teachings will help to explain our history.
- Use the Clan System to determine citizenship roles, responsibilities and issues.
- Have a huge ceremony to help us on this journey.
- Need the Anishinaabe Language – it holds who we are as a People.





# Cultural Criteria

- Cultural practise and involvement widely supported.
- Language-speakers, healing, traditional teachings, spirituality, clan teachings, participation in social gatherings, knowledge and practice of the 7 Grandfather Teachings, all important cultural criteria.
- Acceptance of those who practice other religious traditions, such as Christianity, is a must.



# Other Criteria for Citizenship:

- Special Exceptions – non-Anishinaabe could be granted citizenship through marriage/years spent in the community/contributions to the community.
- In the case of Special Exceptions, several “moral character” criteria were mentioned: i.e. must pass a criminal record-check.
- Suggestions made regarding Nomination, a Guarantor, Community Consensus and Elders’ approval in the case of Special Exceptions.
- Need a section in our law to address Dual Citizenship.



# “We are a Nation...”

- “Reserves” people must revert to Traditional (Nationhood) mindset, not the isolationism of the Indian Act.
- Anishinabek citizenship should be universal with mobility of citizens throughout the Anishinabek Nation.



# “We are a Nation...”

- Transfers and citizenship exchanges be facilitated - perhaps an Anishinabek Nation matter – mobility rights a crucial issue and a traditional one.
- Universal Human Rights and a Charter of Rights and Freedoms enacted at First Nation and Anishinabek Nation levels.
- First Nations must acknowledge legal obligations to non-citizen residents.



# Who Should decide who are Anishinabek citizens?

- Go back to the clan system.
- More input from Elders on traditional, customary practices for citizenship.
- Develop our own constitutions and address citizenship in our constitutions.



# Who should decide? Process

- 1) Applications (new citizens, adoptions, naturalizations) or Nomination by Sponsor/ Guarantor to be taken by a Registrar at the community level, facilitated by a central Registry.
- 2) Committee Review (community committee members to include those who are recognized for wisdom and fairness).
- 3) Approval / Disapproval at the community level.
- 4) Appeals & Redress Process – absolutely necessary.
- 5) Community/First Nation/Anishinabek Nation acceptance.



# Who decides? - Process

- Final Appeals Committee formed at Anishinabek Nation level.
- Process reviewed on regular basis – 3 to 5 years suggested.



# Relationship of First Nations and Anishinabek Nation

- Delegation of responsibilities from First Nations to Central Governing Body must be examined.
- Law operates at two levels: Anishinabek Nation and First Nation.
- Individual First Nations enact own codes within the E-Dbendaagzijig Naaknigwein.
- Do needs assessments on community basis.





# Relationship of First Nations and Anishinabek Nation

- Anishinabek Nation Law to provide basis/standard for First Nations - broader and more inclusive.
- Use universal terminology at both First Nation/Anishinabek Nation levels to ensure clarity and avoid confusion or misuse



# Communications

- Website/Native radio stations, APTN and others.
- To be fully aware of the citizenship law, the information needs to get out two (2) years in advance.
- More public relations in order to get more people out to the meetings.



# Education & Awareness

- Our history and who we are as Anishinabek to be made public and communicated to others to gather support for our cause.
- Taught in schools to our youth.



# Consultation Process

- Website/blog developed appealing to younger audience i.e. Facebook, MySpace
- Ensure Chiefs and Council keep members on and off reserve informed of Citizenship Law issues.



# **Additional Comments...**

## **Received from the Anishinabe Nation**

### **Kwe-wuk Task Group:**

- The following recommendations are the result of the time, effort and commitment of the Anishinabek Nation Kwe-wuk Task Group, June 1 – 4, 2009. My special miigwech and gratitude to all the special Anishinabekwek who participated.



# Additional Comments...

Consensus was achieved on the following recommendations:

- ***Recommendation #1 - Anishinabe bimaadziwin – A Way of Life***
- ***Recommendation #2 - Language/ Anishinabemwin***
- ***Recommendation #3 - Children and Youth***
- ***Recommendation #4 - Leadership Training***



# Additional Comments...

- *Recommendation #5* - **Treaties and Nationhood**
- *Recommendation #6* - **Community Engagement and Nation Building**
- *Recommendation #7* - **Communication and Community Engagement**
- *Recommendation #8* - **Research and Development**



# Additional Comments...

## ***Recommendation #9 - Ratification Process*** **(entire steps)**

Steps to follow:

1. Anishinabek Nation/UOI launches a campaign strategy by developing community information/awareness resources using:
  - Create T-shirts with “Ndibendaagoz” – “I belong”
  - Written materials using plain language
  - Using multi-media formats – TV, local channels, CTV, CBC, etc. newspaper, websites, Facebook





# Additional Comments...

2. Anishinabek Nation/UOI presents E-Dbendaagzijig Naaknigewin to Chiefs and Councils to assist them in presenting the Law in a public meeting to the community using specific resources, materials and training.
3. 1st Reading by Chiefs and Councils level utilizing launch campaign materials. Implement community facilitators for questions and answers from community within two months.
4. 2nd Reading at Chiefs and Councils level to deal with feedback from the community and to finalize E-Dbendaagzijig Law at a community gathering. (Wear Ndibendaagoz T-shirt)
5. Final Anishinabek Nation E-Dbendaagzijig Naaknigewin. (akin to “Royal Assent”)



# Additional Comments...

## *Recommendation #10 - Implementation Process*

1. Law at the Community Level
2. Template from Anishinabek Nation level-  
Review and modify criteria
3. Application directly to community in conjunction  
with Anishinabek Nation
4. Anishinaabe Registry - develop template for  
application, passports, etc.
5. Anishinabek Nation Level (Embassy)



# Miigwetch

“Creating, developing and implementing a powerful Anishinabek Nation Citizenship law is crucial, our responsibility and our mandate from our Elders, our Youth and especially from our children, grandchildren, great-grandchildren and for the Seven Generations to come.”



**“Will we let ourselves be destroyed in our turn without a struggle, give up our homes, our country bequeathed to us by the Great Spirit, the graves of our dead and everything that is dear and sacred to us? I know you will cry with me, “Never! Never!”**

*Tecumseh Shawnee*

