

Municipality of Killarney – Wiikwemkoong Unceded Indian Reserve

Minutes of a Discussion re Wiikwemkoong's Islands Specific Claim Killarney Mountain Lodge, 3 Commissioner St., Killarney ON September 30th, 2015

Present for Wiikwemkoong:

Duke Peltier, Ogimaa
Sandra Wabegijig, Policy Analyst /Communications
Alanna Trudeau, Community Engagement Coordinator
Todd Lewis, Lands Technician
Albert Peltier, Elder

Present for Killarney:

Virginia Rook, Mayor
Nancy Wirtz, Councillor
Adele Loosemore, Staff/Recording Secretary

Following introductions, Mayor Rook welcomed Ogimaa Peltier to Killarney village, and stated that she and Councillor Wirtz were very pleased to meet with representatives of Wiikwemkoong to learn more about the Islands claim. Ogimaa Peltier said he was looking forward to the discussion and welcomed any questions that the Killarney people had regarding the islands claim. In his view, by listening or responding to the questions and concerns Killarney has, the less likely the people will rely on rumours or misunderstand what is happening with the claim. He then briefly gave an overview of the specific land claims process.

Mayor Rook said that some members of the public are concerned about islands that they may lose access to, in particular Philip Edward Island (PEI), and asked if Wiikwemkoong intends to allow the public continued access if the land is transferred to their ownership.

Ogimaa Peltier said that their government operates on a consensus system. Any plans for use of the lands will need to be addressed by the Band Council, and then approved by Wiikwemkoong Band members. At this stage, Wiikwemkoong is gathering information on land use planning. For instance, at the land claim public consultation meeting in Toronto, they spoke with kayakers and others who have made use of PEI, and asked them if they would be willing to show Wiikwemkoong several locations on the Island that would be suitable for setting aside for public use, such as camp sites. If such sites are established, a user fee would likely be established. Wiikwemkoong is also open to the possibility of entering into agreements with local tourist operators, some of whom have used the Island in the past for shore lunches and excursions for their guests.

Mayor Rook provided Ogimaa Peltier with a copy of the Municipality's Economic Development Strategy, and he indicated that Wiikwemkoong would be interested in discussing partnerships with the Municipality for mutually beneficial economic development projects.

Mayor Rook noted that members of the public have repeatedly stated that First Nations are not required to follow any environmental regulations on their lands, and therefore they are particularly worried about housing that might be built, with inadequate septic systems that leak toxic liquids into the waters.

Todd Lewis explained that Wiikwemkoong does follow environmental practices with regard to water quality testing that is conducted annually. They travel around their coastline to take samples in front of waterfront residences/business. The water samples are then submitted to Health Canada for testing. Ogimaa Peltier said that some water samples have also been taken at the Point Grondine Reserve, but a regular annual program is not yet in place there.

Mayor Rook said that she has been told by several people that there is a lot of garbage on Philip Edward Island. Ogimaa Peltier said that they had visited that Island and saw the garbage that had been left along its coast, and also noted that there is very little brush left, since people have used most of it for campfires. He remarked that Philip Edward Island needs to be managed, to reduce the negative effects of such practices.

Mayor Rook inquired about the possibility of George Island being removed from the proposed land settlement. Ogimaa Peltier stated that it has taken years for these lands to be agreed upon and he did not believe that either party [Wiikwemkoong nor the Ontario government] would reopen those discussions.

Mayor Rook noted that the Municipality had recently been informed by the Ontario Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs (OMAA) about a strip of Crown land along the coastline of Badgeley Island, which had previously been overlooked by the Province. Mayor Rook inquired about whether or not Wiikwemkoong could make use of that land. Todd Lewis said it appears as though there is enough room on that strip for cottage development.

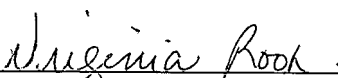
Mayor Rook shared with Ogimaa Peltier that during the Killarney Public Meeting in September, someone had suggested that the Province consider including part of Killarney Provincial Park in the settlement lands, rather than Philip Edward Island. The person suggested, specifically, the section of Park that includes the Chikanishing Creek, the old Chikanishing village, and the launch ramp, along the south side of Highway 637. It was clarified that the public meeting was held by the Municipality and not OMAA. At that meeting, a brief discussion was held in relation to the number and types of concerns that have been received about the land claim by the Municipality. Ogimaa Peltier also related that the same types of concerns were raised with Wiikwemkoong. It appears that the issues raised in letters received by both governments are very similar, and focus on environmental matters, public access, and land use.

Reference was made to the availability of Permits for the snowmobile trail that passes through Wiikwemkoong's Point Grondine Reserve. Adele Loosemore stated that she would find out when the Permits come on sale. [When the Point Grondine land claim was settled, the final agreement included continued public access to the part of the trail that crosses the Reserve. The trail system is maintained by the Ontario Federation of Snowmobile Clubs (OFSC). The OFSC also sells the Permits that are required by the Ministry of Transportation for use of snowmobile trails across the Province.]

Elder Albert Peltier remarked that Wiikwemkoong and Killarney village had a closer relationship in the past and that he feels the communities have drifted apart somewhat. He suggested that the Municipality and the Band Council work together to ensure that the bond of friendship remains strong.


- It was agreed that Killarney and Wiikwemkoong work together to keep everyone informed about matters surrounding the land claim, and to address related concerns being raised by the public. This will serve to mitigate rumours and correct some of the misinformation that is being circulated.
- It was agreed that Killarney and Wiikwemkoong will begin holding regular meetings, with the next one to be hosted by Wiikwemkoong.
- It was agreed that a draft memorandum of understanding will be drawn up by Sandra Wabegijig, for review by Wiikwemkoong's Band Council and Killarney's Municipal Council, outlining how the two governments will work together. The draft will be provided to Adele Loosemore, who is to be the contact person for the Municipality and will continue to attend the Wiikwemkoong-Killarney meetings.

The meeting was adjourned at 2:50 pm.



Virginia Rook, Mayor

Nancy Wirtz, Councillor



Adele Loosemore, Recording Secretary