

May 2023 BI Blast Article:

Citizenship Update – Initiative gets reset, responding to citizens' input

A fresh, amended Draft Citizenship Law will be available for distribution in time for the Sunday, May 14, 2023 information and engagement session at Bear Island.

The amended Draft law incorporates the input received from the first round of information and engagement events at Bear Island on February 26 and March 18, and on April 22 at the North Bay Indigenous Friendship Centre (NBIFC). Discussion with Elders at Bear Island on March 10 and with the Youth at the NBIFC on April 17 will also inform changes to the Draft Citizenship Law.

The input received so far indicates that since the citizenship initiative is an expression of inherent jurisdiction - law-making and decision-making - there should be no reference to outside authorities like Canada's laws and institutions, or the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

Most of the discussion and input has centred on eligibility criteria. Connection to the Teme-Augama Anishnabai and N'dakimenan are foremost in the minds of Teme-Augama Anishnabai citizens. Also, the conditional acceptance of Teme-Augama Anishnabai citizens who remain registered status Indians and members of other First Nations than Temagami was a repeated theme.

Regarding connection to Teme-Augama Anishnabai kin, a cut-off date is suggested as a way to avoid unrealistic claims to citizenship from unknown people relying on a connection from hundreds of years ago. Cultural knowledge such as Teme-Augama Anishnabai history, traditions, and language was offered as important criteria too. It was suggested that Anishinaabe terms and language should be integrated, as far as possible. For example, "Onaakonigewin" is the word that translates to "law".

At the same time as the Draft Citizenship Law is being amended, the Citizenship Committee is developing an expanded engagement strategy, including the communications work plan, with the input and collaboration from citizens. The ratification process and timeline for the referendum vote on the Draft Citizenship Law are also being discussed for input.

Upcoming engagement sessions are with Elders at the Ronnoco Building in Temagami on May 3; The Laura McKenzie Learning Centre with Youth on May 10; and at the Minowaabandagamiing Maawanjihidiwining at Bear Island on May 14, following the Mothers' Day Brunch.

For more information, please email citizenship@temagamifirstnation.ca or call Citizenship Coordinator Dwayne Becker at (705) 237-8943 ext. 232.

