



MATAWA FIRST NATIONS



MUSHKEGOWUK COUNCIL

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

NORTHERN FIRST NATIONS COME TOGETHER TO SIGN A DECLARATION FOR IMPLEMENTATION OF THE ORAL TREATY

September 27, 2011 – Moose Cree First Nation, ON – Seven Matawa First Nations and Seven Mushkegowuk First Nations have signed a declaration to work together to achieve the implementation of the Oral Treaty. The Chiefs Declaration states that we are “...committed to exercising our inherent and treaty rights, without limitations imposed by others. We will consider the use of any options to ensure that the development of our homelands occurs only with the free, informed and prior consent of our First Nations.”

“Implementation of the Oral Treaty is long overdue,” said Chief Sonny Gagnon of Aroland First Nation. “For over 100 years we have kept the promises we made to the Crown Governments of Ontario and Canada. Now they will have to acknowledge, respect, and abide by the promises they made to us. From now on, the First Nations that signed this declaration will be living by the Oral Treaty. That means we do not go by the written treaty document, but by the actual promises that were made to us at the time Treaty No. 9 was signed.”

The James Bay Treaty (Treaty No. 9) was one of the last numbered treaties to be signed in Canada. It is the only treaty in Canada that was signed by a province. It was first signed in 1905 and 1906 by the Canadian Government, the Ontario Government, and the Cree, Ojibway and Algonquin Nations of what is now known as Northern and Northwestern Ontario. The Nations who signed in 1905-06 included those people occupying the area south of the Albany River. Adhesions with the remaining Cree and Ojibway Nations north of the Albany River were signed in 1929 and 1930.

“The Cree and Ojibway people have used oral tradition to pass down to each generation the promises which were made by the Treaty Commissioners to our People, and the promises that were made by our people to the Crown. Those promises did not include giving up our land or our right to govern ourselves,” said Mushkegowuk Grand Chief Stan Louttit. “This declaration will be an important tool for unity which we will use to protect our rights, which include the right to give or withhold consent on any activity taking place on our lands.”

“The right to consultation and accommodation, which stems from the written treaty and our First Nation inherent rights, is enshrined in Section 35 of the *Canadian Constitution Act, 1980*. Our Oral Treaty rights are just as significant and just as binding,” said Chief Celia Echum of Ginoogaming First Nation. “The People of Matawa and Mushkegowuk have had ties with each other since time immemorial. We are pleased to work together on implementation of the Oral Treaty.”

Matawa is a Tribal Council with a membership of nine Ojibway and Cree First Nation communities in Northern Ontario. Five Matawa First Nations are remote and are currently accessible only by air or winter ice road. Matawa First Nations Management provides advisory services and program delivery to Matawa First Nations.

Mushkegowuk Council has a membership of seven Cree First Nations, four in the James Bay Coastal area, and three First Nations south of the 50th parallel. It provides political advocacy and advisory services for its member First Nations.

The James Bay Treaty area encompasses almost two thirds of Ontario.

Declaration First Nation Signatories

Mushkegowuk First Nations

Chapleau Cree First Nation
Moose Cree First Nation
Taykwa Tagamou First Nation
Missanabie Cree First Nation
Fort Albany First Nation
Kashechewan First Nation
Attawapiskat First Nation

Matawa First Nations

Aroland First Nation
Constance Lake First Nation
Ginoogaming First Nation
Long Lake #58 First Nation
Neskantaga First Nation
Nibinamik First Nation
Webequie First Nation

For More Information Contact:

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Chief Sonny Gagnon, Aroland First Nation (807) 329-5333