



A message from Chief and Council to the BNA Membership:
Land Code Vote March 29th

Dear BNA Members,

In the coming days, you will receive a package in the mail regarding the upcoming vote on Bingwi Neyaashi's Land Code. You have heard about this initiative many times over the past two years. In April 2012, the former Chief signed on to the Framework Agreement for the First Nation Land Management Act (FNLMA) at an adhesion ceremony in Ottawa. Due to the major benefits associated with having one's own Land Code, the FNLMA process is extremely competitive. There are only a few dozen First Nations across Canada that have gone through the Land Code process, and who have removed themselves from the oppressive aspects of the Indian Act related to lands. We hope that at the end of March, Sand Point will add itself to that list.

Since the election of Chief and Council last January, we have made the Land Code one of our top priorities. After having gathered the names of interested Members, the leadership selected seven names to sit on the Lands Committee. These individuals represented the different age groups and families of the community, and the Committee worked tremendously hard over the course of 6 months to draft BNA's Land Code. Along with ensuring all Committee Meeting minutes were regularly up on the website, the Land Code was also brought to the BNA membership for consultation and input on November 16th, 2013, and January 18th, 2014. BNA's Land Code is arguably one of the most democratic and inclusive Land Codes of any that have been developed across the country. And we believe that ensuring that you have a say on any Land Law proposed is critical to the development of our reserve lands, and its associated laws.

The benefits of having a Land Code include:

Sovereignty and Local Control – 25% of the Indian Act will no longer apply to BNA. We will be in control of the management of our own reserve land. Decisions on Land Laws will be made by you, the Member, not by bureaucrats in Ottawa. If there is a Law that you want implemented, as a Member, you have the right to bring it forward for deliberation.

Matrimonial Property Rights – a Land Code provides communities an opportunity to develop their own laws regarding Matrimonial Real Property. A Committee is being prepared based on interested Members, and it will begin its work in April upon a successful Land Code vote.

Economic Development – Opportunities for wealth creation and employment will be pursued based on the membership's timeline, *not* the timeline of the Department of Aboriginal Affairs.

The Chief and Council of Bingwi Neyaashi stand behind the Land Code developed by the BNA Lands Committee, and fully support this initiative. We hope that you, too, see the value in having our own Land Code, and urge you to vote "yes" on March 29th to both the BNA Land Code, and to the Individual Agreement signed between BNA and Canada.

If you have any questions about the content of the Land Code or about this process in general, please call Jordan Hatton at the Band Office, at 807-623-2724, or on his cell at 807-472-9619.

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Chief Laura Airms