



**BINGWI NEYAASHI ANISHINAABEK**  
**Sand Point First Nation**

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**March 30<sup>th</sup>, 2014**

***In a Historic Vote, the Members of Bingwi Neyaashi Anishinaabek approve its Land Code, the Community is to manage its own Reserve Land and Resources going forward***

**Thunder Bay (March 30, 2014)** – On March 29<sup>th</sup>, 2014, Members of Bingwi Neyaashi Anishinaabek cast their ballots in the Ratification Vote on their *Land Code*. With a vote result of 111 to 6, an overwhelming majority (94%) of the members who cast a ballot gave a clear message that authority over land governance be returned to Bingwi Neyaashi from the Department of Aboriginal Affairs.

The *Framework Agreement on First Nation Land Management* was the first real recognition that First Nations have an inherent right to manage their own reserve lands and resources. This First Nation-conceived *Framework Agreement* with Canada has expanded from the original 14 First Nation signatories in 1996, to 112 First Nations signatories in 2014. BNA will now implement land governance, assume jurisdiction over their reserve lands and resources, and opt out of 34 land-related sections of the Indian Act – all critical steps leading ultimately toward self-sufficiency. The BNA *Land Code* was drafted by the membership as a grass-roots endeavour. The BNA Lands Committee operated on the basis of consensus throughout the drafting process.

“This vote clearly shows the support that the membership of Bingwi Neyaashi has for the Land Code that was developed by the BNA Lands Committee”, said Chief Laura Airns following the vote count. “We are thrilled with the overwhelming participation of the membership. All BNA Members will now have an opportunity to vote on every Land Law that is brought forward to the community. They will be the stewards of the land going forward, not the federal government”. Jordan Hatton, BNA’s Director of Lands and Resources, concurred with the Chief’s words. “I am so excited that the BNA Members have decided to take over control of the governance of their own Land”, Hatton said. “The possibilities for economic development and organized Land Use Planning are endless. This Land Code will ensure that developments on-reserve occur with the consent and the wishes of the membership, as well as within the timelines that the Members feel comfortable with. It is a very big day for Bingwi Neyaashi”.

“This vote is one of the most significant events to occur for Bingwi Neyaashi since its Land was returned to the community in the spring of 2010”, said Chief Airns. “As the 47<sup>th</sup> First Nation across Canada to ratify a Land Code, our Code will reflect the unique needs and traditions of the community, provide sound environmental protection for our reserve land and resources, and accelerate progress in areas such as economic development”.

**About Bingwi Neyaashi Anishinaabek:** BNA, also known as Sand Point First Nation, is a community of nearly 250 members. The First Nation is located on the southeast shores of Lake Nipigon. BNA just recently had its land returned to them in April 2010 following years of displacement at the hands of the provincial and federal governments. The community and its leadership are now forging ahead with major economic development initiatives, and re-establishing the community for the eventual return of the membership to their homeland.

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