

Governance Committee Meeting Schedule

2014-2015

Purpose

This meeting schedule establishes the objectives that the Governance Committee will meet while working towards Year 2 goals outlined in the 2011-2012 Fort William First Nation Governance Strategic Plan and Framework, namely renewing the 1988 FWFN Membership Code and engaging the community effectively in this process. This schedule was approved by the Governance Committee through consensus at the May 26, 2014 Committee meeting.

Rationale

The Governance Committee has time for approximately 20 meetings between May 2014 and April 2015. The ultimate goal of the committee is to produce a renewed membership code, a new election code, and, eventually, a FWFN constitution. In 2014-15, the committee will continue its work on renewing the 1988 Fort William First Nation Membership Code, and aims to put a renewed code to Chief and Council for comment by the end of March 2015.

However, before the Committee can begin this work, some unlearning is required. We can be a danger to our community if we do not first account for the ways in which we perpetuate or protect problematic ideas about what it means to belong with FWFN. For example, recent studies have shown that using Indian status or blood quantum as the criteria for band membership will result in the extinction of First Nation Bands within the next 50 years. Extinction needs to be avoided if we are to continue on as a First Nation community.

The Governance Committee meeting schedule will therefore account for these and other issues in a series of meetings divided into seven phases. After a phase meant to expose colonialism and re-centre Anishinaabe intellectual/legal orders, we will move into research and working phases. The Committee will engage the community in a number of focus groups, and then return to the meeting table to review the existing membership code vis-à-vis Anishinaabe legal orders *and* what the community has to say about citizenship/membership.

Meetings will progress through the following phases:

1. Centering Anishinaabe thought, decolonization
2. Review of the existing FWFN membership code, and context
3. Community Based Research
4. Synthesis of Research Results
5. Editing and Review
6. Delivery to FWFN Chief and Council

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Meetings Outline:

PHASE 1: Centering Anishinaabe thought, decolonization

Meeting 1 Colonialism and Zhaaganaashiiyaadizi

Albert Memmi, the author of *The Colonizer and the Colonized*, wrote that for colonialism to work, the colonized need to accept their role as the oppressed. For First Nations in Canada, accepting this role has come with actually *protecting* the colonial order, often unconsciously. This initial meeting will expose colonialism as a hidden force affecting how we, as Anishinaabe, think. Doing so is imperative when developing governance codes for FWFN, as we may unknowingly perpetuate colonial thinking that can harm our community. Good intentions are not enough.

The term *zhaaganaashiiyaadizi* will be introduced to describe colonialism from an Anishinaabe point of view.

Meeting 2 The *Indian Act* and Band Membership: Diagnosing the Problem

The Committee will review the connections between the *Indian Act* and band membership. Has band membership always existed? If not, where did it come from? This meeting will explore the colonial logics behind band membership – tracing it back to European imaginations of the “Indian,” and how Canadian Indian policy was designed to get rid of Indigenous peoples. Of particular importance, the idea of “blood quantum” will be discussed as a form of genocide meant to achieve what Pamela Palmater has called “legislative extinction.”

Meeting 3 Biskaabiiyang and Self-Determination

In looking for ways to move beyond the logics Canada has developed to regulate Indians out of existence, it is important to centre Anishinaabe intellectual, political, and legal orders. To do otherwise would be unethical, as FWFN is an Anishinaabe community with a rich history of *sui generis* law – this should be honoured in our work. In this meeting, the Committee will review the Anishinaabe concept *biskaabiiyang*; meaning “returning to ourselves,” *biskaabiiyang* allows us to use Anishinaabe theory in renewing the FWFN membership code. Using Anishinaabe theory in this way is a form of intellectual self-determination.

Meeting 4 Anishinaabe Legal Orders and Belonging

The Committee will discuss how belonging is theorized and practiced within Anishinaabe law (as opposed to Canadian “Aboriginal” law). Anishinaabe law places the responsibility for discerning belonging with families or clans (see *Roseau River Clan Responsibilities*). This meeting will expose Committee members to Anishinaabe legal theory as it relates to belonging, and will draw on the Robinson-Superior Treaty, 1850 to demonstrate such law survived the assertion of Canadian sovereignty (e.g. see *R. vs Powley, 2003*). Anishinaabe *aadizookaanag* (sacred stories) will also be reviewed here.

Meeting 5 Guest speaker, Jill Doerfler: Reclaiming Citizenship at White Earth Reservation

Dr. Doerfler will share with us her work on reclaiming citizenship at the White Earth Nation (Minnesota) in ways that honour Anishinaabe legal orders.

PHASE 2: Review of the existing FWFN membership code, and context

- Meeting 6** **FWFN Membership Code and the 1987 Context of Opting-out of the *Indian Act***
The purpose of this meeting is not to edit the code, but to review it in its entirety. Discuss the code in the context of the 1987 discussion notes (as received from AANDC through the federal Access to Information program), and in relation to s.10 of the *Indian Act, 1985*. The purpose of this meeting is to flag positive and negative elements of the code for future review. How does it relate to Anishinaabe legal orders? How does it uphold colonial idea of Indianness?
- Meeting 7** **Review of Other Membership Codes and UOI *E-Dbendaagzijing* Citizenship Law**
The purpose of this meeting is to place the FWFN membership code in context. How does it measure up with other codes? How does it compare with the Anishinabek Nation's citizenship law, *E-Dbendaagzijing Naakingewin*? The Committee will review a selection of membership codes posted on the www.indigenousnationhood.com website,¹ as well as the Anishinabek Nation's *E-Dbendaagzijing Naakingewin*.
- Meeting 8** **One-parent Rules, Two-parent Rules, and Blood Quantum?**
Based on the review of other codes and the *E-Dbendaagzijing*, and based on an awareness of how colonialism has affected Anishinaabe belonging, the Committee will consider and discuss the various methods used to discern band membership. What are the pros and cons of: one parent rule? Two-parent rule? Blood quantum-based membership criteria?

PHASE 3: Community Based Research

- Meeting 9** **Research Design and Methodology: Indigenist/Biskaabiiyang**
This meeting will provide the committee members with the tools necessary for conducting ethical research. It is important to note that Indigenous peoples have been studied to death *as a part of colonialism*. But this does not mean research isn't important to Indigenous peoples. Anishinaabeg have been conducting research for thousands of years, using their own intellectual orders and protocols. How can we engage FWFN in discussions about citizenship (band membership) in ways that do not reproduce colonial ideas about Indianness? How can we do this using Anishinaabeg research methodology? Indigenist and biskaabiiyang methodologies will be discussed here.
- Meeting 10** **Support with Focus Groups**
The purpose of this meeting is to provide support to those who have been working with the focus groups, including addressing questions pertaining to ethics, methodology, ambiguities, and unforeseen complications.
- Meeting 11** **Support with Focus Groups**
The purpose of this meeting is to continue providing support to those who have been working with the focus groups. Committee members are required to return to focus groups to verify that information collected has been recorded properly.

¹ See: <http://www.indigenousnationhood.com/identity/membership/codes.html>

PHASE 4: Synthesis of Research Results

Meeting 12 Analysis of Focus Group Responses

Committee members will report back to the group with final results from focus group sessions. Responses will be compiled during this meeting, and analyzed using Indigenist and *biskaabiiyang* methodologies.

Meeting 13 Analysis of Focus Group Responses

Committee members will continue on with the work from previous meeting.

Meeting 14 Putting the Responses Together

The purpose of this meeting is to synthesize the results and analyses from the previous two meetings. Analyses from the focus groups will shape the FWFN citizenship/membership code.

Phase 5: Editing and Review

Meeting 15 Editing the FWFN Band Membership Code

This meeting will begin the process of editing the membership code. Edits will be made in ways that honour Anishinaabe legal orders as well as responses from focus groups.

Meeting 16 Editing the FWFN Band Membership Code

This meeting will continue the process of editing the membership code.

Meeting 17 Reviewing the Draft Code

This meeting is dedicated to reviewing the draft membership code, and is the space for Committee members to self-critique our work to date. Have we met our goals? Has the research been ethical? Has it promoted *biskaabiiyang*? Does the draft code reflect the responses from the focus groups? Representatives from the FWFN C+C sitting on the Governance Committee will provide their feedback on the draft code.

Phase 6: Delivery to FWFN C+C

Meeting 18 C+C Members on Governance Committee review and comment on Code

The Chief and Council members on the Governance Committee will have a chance to review the draft code. This meeting is their chance to flag issues that may hold up adoption by Chief and Council.

Meeting 19 Final Edits and Review

The Committee will put the final touches on the draft code, taking into account the feedback from the FWFN C+C representatives from the previous meeting. The purpose of this final meeting is to polish the draft so that it is ready for adoption by the Fort William First Nation Chief and Council.

Meeting 20 Present Draft of Renewed Membership Code to FWFN C+C

The Committee, or its representatives (appointed by the Committee through consensus), will attend a FWFN Chief and Council meeting to formally present the draft membership code to the Band, and to answer questions.