

September 22, 2023

Aanin Kina Wiya,

We write this letter to you, the citizens of Nipissing First Nation, mindful of our shared history, our ancestors' vision, and the well-being of our future generations. Our Nation stands at a pivotal moment, and it is essential that we come together to honour the legacy of the Robinson-Huron Treaty and make decisions that will shape Nipissing First Nation now and into the future.

The recent Restoule decision, ruled by Judge Hennessy in 2018 and upheld in 2021, has laid down a significant legal requirement: The annuities owed are both collective and individual. These two streams were both meant to increase as revenues increased. This requirement was understood and supported by the 21 First Nations of the Robinson Huron Treaty and upheld by Judge Hennessy.

"...the Treaties were a collective promise to share the revenues from the territory with the collective; in other words, to increase the lump sum annuity so long as the economic condition was met. The reference to £1 (equivalent of \$4) in the augmentation clause is a limit only on the amount that may be distributed to individuals... I find that the parties did not intend to limit increases to the annuities to \$4 per person." - P.C. Hennessy, Stage One Judgement

Chief Shingwaukonse was a leader with a vision for his people in negotiating the treaty and focused on support for self-determination and self-sufficiency, as well as a desire for compensation for the collective benefit of the bands.

This requirement and the wishes of past Chiefs, who negotiated the treaty, serve as a powerful reminder of the enduring commitment our ancestors made through our Treaty to safeguard our rights and our land, ensuring prosperity for generations yet unborn. It is a responsibility that we cannot take lightly. As Chief and Council, we see it as a requirement that there must not only be a distribution to our members directly as a result of this settlement, but also funds set aside for the collective and future benefit of our Nation.

No decision has been made on how much will be distributed or set aside at this time. We need your help to determine what our approach should be as Nipissing First Nation. As Chief and Council, we also have a responsibility to have ongoing and meaningful engagements on these decisions and possible future decisions with Debendaagziwaad.

Our goals are clear:

1. **Honour Ancestral Wishes:** We must remain faithful to the aspirations of our ancestors who entered into the Treaty to protect our rights and land. Their vision was for the betterment of all future generations, and we must continue to uphold this sacred trust.
2. **Social Cohesion:** Our Nation's strength lies in its unity. The Land, the people, and the future are interconnected, and we must work together to strengthen social cohesion within Nipissing First Nation.
3. **Economic growth and Sustainability:** We need to foster economic growth that ensures long-term sustainability. This will not only benefit us today but will lay a foundation of prosperity for generations to come.

4. **Long Term:** As we make decisions, we must consider long-term, in accordance with our Gichi-Naaknigewin and Strategic Plan. We have the responsibility to make a positive impact on our Nation and the world around us.
5. **Ripple Effects:** Our actions have ripple effects that extend beyond the present moment. We must be mindful of the legacy we leave for future generations like our ancestors did at the time of the signing in 1850
6. **Quality of Life:** The ultimate aim is to continually improve the quality of life for all members, both now and in the future.

It is crucial to note that Nipissing First Nation will not receive any settlement funds until spring or early summer 2024. This is for two reasons: (1) Funds will not transfer from the governments of Canada and Ontario until at least 60 days after the signing, estimated to take place in November 2023; and (2) There is significant work to determine the total number of annuitants across the Robinson-Huron territory, which will take some time. In the meantime, our Nation will build a plan to address concerns and challenges through meaningful engagement with all Debendaagziwaad.

To do this work, we take the following steps:

- Establish a technical team to explore options for the proper structure to hold the funds.
- Determine mechanisms to govern and manage the use of these funds, ensuring complete transparency and accountability, as outlined in our Gichi-Naaknigewin and Financial Administration Law.
- Creating a mechanism to enhance strategic planning that ensures input from Debendaagziwaad for the use of these funds.
- Management and Council actively review priorities to share with Debendaagziwaad.

But Management and Council cannot do this alone. We need your engagement, your questions, and your support. To ensure that we all benefit from this settlement, we ask the following of you:

- Engage earnestly and direct your questions to the appropriate individuals.
- Recognize that expertise relevant to Nipissing First Nation's situation may not be found on social media or other First Nation websites. For accurate and up-to-date information, visit the NFN Membership Portal: portal.nfn.ca.
- When the time comes, please participate and vote on managing settlement funds.
- Educate yourself and your loved ones on the wise use of these funds, both for your immediate benefit and for the creation of a long-lasting benefit for the Nation.

In conclusion, this moment presents a unique opportunity for our Nation to secure its future and honour its past. Let us remember the sacrifices and visions of those who came before us and the hopes they held for our people. By working together and making informed, thoughtful decisions, we can ensure that Nipissing First Nation thrives now and for generations to come.

Please stay engaged, ask questions, and join us to shape our shared destiny.

Miigwech Kina Wiya – Thank You Everyone.

Chief and Council
Nipissing First Nation