



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**March 17, 2016**

**Results of the Algonquins of Ontario Ratification Vote on the proposed Agreement-in-Principle**

**Pembroke, ON** – Today, the Algonquins of Ontario (AOO) announced the results of the ratification vote on their proposed Agreement-in-Principle (AIP) with the Governments of Ontario and Canada. The tripartite ratification vote was conducted by an independent Ratification Committee with members appointed by the AOO, Ontario and Canada.

A total of 3,575 ballots were cast, out of 7,540 eligible Algonquin Voters – a participation rate of 47 percent. Of those ballots cast, 3,341, or over 90 per cent voted in favour of the AIP and the continuation of negotiations towards the terms of a Final Agreement based on the AIP.

Robert Potts, Principal Negotiator and Senior Legal Counsel for the Algonquins of Ontario stated, “The tripartite ratification vote was positive with Algonquin Voters supporting the AIP by a strong margin, and unanimously in one community.”

The Chief and Council of the Algonquins of Pikwakanagan First Nation (Pikwakanagan) initiated a separate, parallel referendum on the proposed AIP to ensure that the opportunity to vote was provided to a significant percentage of the adult membership of Pikwakanagan who did not enrol under the process set out in the proposed Agreement-in-Principle.

The results of the Pikwakanagan referendum indicate that further time will be required to clarify and resolve certain issues. In that vote, 243 Pikwakanagan members voted against the AIP and 87 votes were cast in favour of it. In comparison, of the Pikwakanagan members who voted in the tripartite ratification vote 159 were in favour and 84 were against. Tallying up the votes of the two processes, 327 Pikwakanagan members voted against the AIP and 246 votes were cast in favour of it. Safeguards were in place to ensure that there was no overlap between the voters in each process.

Chief Kirby Whiteduck of Pikwakanagan stated, “Many of our members expressed concern and were led to believe that signing the proposed AIP would inevitably mean a self-government agreement that would end reserve status for the existing reserve and the existing *Indian Act* tax exemption.”

Chief Kirby Whiteduck wants the opportunity to clarify the matter. “To date there have been no negotiations on self-government and nothing has been agreed upon. We think it is premature to say no to self-government negotiations at this point and eliminate the possibility of securing long-term recognition and stronger protection as a First Nation through this process.”

Chief Kirby Whiteduck said the First Nation Council is committed to securing the free and informed consent of our Pikwakanagan members to any future self-government agreement, and

to take the time necessary to negotiate an agreement that members will both understand and support.

“We are deeply concerned that this message was not heard by our members,” he said.

“At some point the members of the Algonquins of Pikwakanagan First Nation, and only our members, will have to decide on the merits of any self-government proposal. This is a decision that must be made with all of the relevant facts and based on an actual draft agreement.”

Chief Whiteduck added, “Our members who voted in the referendum and tripartite ratification vote are currently divided on the proposed AIP and some do not have the level of comfort to move forward at this moment. As a result, our Council requires further discussions and consultations with Canada and Ontario to clarify certain issues, to address the concerns of our members and to bridge the divisions in our community. I will also be writing to Canada and Ontario seeking written confirmation of certain matters of concern and will share their responses with our membership.”

Clifford Bastien Jr., the Algonquin Negotiation Representative for the Mattawa/North Bay Algonquin Community, added, “The AOO are pleased with the result of the ratification vote. However, we also know that the issues raised within Pikwakanagan do not apply to the other Algonquin communities who, in aggregate, voted in favour of the AIP. Consequently, we are all supportive of the Algonquins of Pikwakanagan First Nation as they take the necessary steps to pursue discussions with Ontario and Canada to determine how best to move forward towards a long-delayed Treaty.”

Clifford Bastien Jr. also stated that “even with the overwhelming support for the proposed AIP the AOO leadership remain committed to working with their communities to continue their efforts to improve the current package towards a stronger Treaty during the next phase of our negotiations, in co-operation with the Governments of Canada and Ontario.”

Robert Potts, Principal Negotiator and Senior Legal Counsel for the Algonquin Treaty Negotiations concluded “while we still face significant challenges in this historic endeavour, we extend our sincerest appreciation to all Algonquin Voters who exercised their right to vote. This unique non-binding process undertaken by the AOO has achieved exactly what was intended – that is, to take the temperature of the various Algonquin communities and to determine the issues that now must be addressed.”

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### **About the Algonquins of Ontario**

The Algonquins of Ontario are comprised of ten Algonquin communities located across the Settlement Area. These include the Algonquins of Pikwakanagan First Nation, Antoine, Kijicho Manito Madaouskarini (Bancroft), Bonnechere, Greater Golden Lake, Mattawa/North Bay, Ottawa, Shabot Obaadjiwan (Sharbot Lake), Snimikobi (Ardoch) and Whitney and Area.

These ten communities are working together, based on a Protocol signed in 2004, which provides a unified approach to reach a settlement of the Algonquin land claim.

On June 12, 2015, the Algonquins of Ontario and the Governments of Canada and Ontario announced that their Negotiators had initialed a proposed AIP. The Ratification Vote process began on December 2, 2015 and ended with the final votes cast on March 7, 2016. This Vote is the next step in the negotiations towards reaching a modern-day Treaty that would be protected under section 35 of the *Constitution Act, 1982*.

The proposed AIP is not a legally binding document, but it represents a statement of the main elements of a settlement of the Algonquin Land Claim and provides the framework for future negotiations towards a Final Agreement that will have the legal status of a modern-day Treaty.

More information on the proposed AIP and the Ratification Vote can be accessed online at [www.tanakiwin.com](http://www.tanakiwin.com).

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