



# Newsletter

## Special Edition



# GOVERNANCE REFORM PROJECT

We hope this newsletter finds you in good health and high spirits. Council has established a Special Committee on Governance who is tasked with a Governance Reform Project. The Project is looking to enhance the Nation’s leadership selection process through the development of an Election Law and will re-examine the Council’s role, responsibility and accountability to its Citizens by amending Michipicoten First Nation’s Chi-Naaknigewin (Constitution) and Council Policies and Procedures. In this edition, we delve into why these documents are the bedrock of our sustained success and how you are being asked to become involved in their development.

The Project is a stepping stone towards achieving self-government. Sound governance policies serve as the ethical compass of our Nation, guiding us towards decisions that align with our core Mission and Values. By adhering to transparent and accountable practices, we build and maintain trust among all our stakeholders, including our Citizens, employees, and neighbouring governments.

Citizen engagement is a key priority for this Project. As such, the Project is being initiated by a Governance Survey — see insert — and we are asking all eligible voters to complete this survey and return it before March 1st, 2024. The survey can be returned by mail, scanned and emailed to [michipicoten@michipicoten.com](mailto:michipicoten@michipicoten.com) or completed online at: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/MFN2024GovSurvey>

Project updates and key documents can be accessed on the Governance Reform Project webpage at: <https://michipicoten.com/Citizens-portal/new-governance-reform-project/>

If you have questions about the Project plan, survey or Citizen engagement opportunities, please join us for our first:

### [Virtual Information Session](#)

**WHEN?** Wednesday, January 31st, 2024

**WHAT TIME?** 6:00-6:45pm (EST)

**WHERE?** On Zoom: <https://zoom.us/join>

**Meeting ID: 859 0132 8295**

**Passcode: 876541**

Or Dial by your location

+1 507 473 4847 US

+1 438 809 7799 Canada

Click or copy this link into you web browser:

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/85901328295?pwd=lcpV4bTeM0nk6ApZh6xWEgr4COvdl.1>

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# Opening Prayer

The spiritual realm is considered the highest place of intelligence to seek direction in life. This is why all Council meetings are opened with a prayer.

The Council wishes to offer this prayer as we embark upon this journey in order to give thanks for all that Creator has gifted and ask the manidoog to join us as we deliberate throughout this Governance Reform Project.

## **Gizhe Manidoo** (Creator)

**I'iw nama'ewinan, maaba asemaa, miinwaa  
n'ode'winaanin gda-bagidinimaagom.**  
(We offer our prayers, tobacco and our hearts.)

**Miigwech gda-igom n'mishomissinaanig  
miinwa n'ookomisinaanig jiinaago  
gaa-iyaaig, noongom e-iyaaig miinwaa  
waabang ge-iyaaig.**

(Thank you for the Grandfathers and Grandmothers of yesterday, today and tomorrow.)

**Miigwech manidoog iyaajig noodinong,  
iyaajig nibiing,  
iyaajig shkodeng miinwa iyaajig akiing.**  
(Thank you spirits of the winds, water, fire and earth.)

**Miigwech manidoog iyaajig giwediong,  
waabanong,  
zhaawanong miinwa epangishimok.**  
Thank you spirits of the north, east, south and west.

**Daga bi-wiidokawishinaang wii mino  
bimaadiziyaang.**  
Please help us to live a good life.

**Ahow!**

The work of the Special Committee on Governance is being carried out by the following Committee members:

- Councillor Linda Peterson
- Councillor Irene Armstrong
- Councillor Christine Lewis
- Councillor Sandra Donney-Fraser
- Jessica Labranche, Committee Advisor

Through this Governance Reform Project, we would like to bring more elements of Anishinaabe traditional governance into our discussions. However, we are mindful that Citizens are at different stages in their journey of remembering and practicing our culture and traditions. As a Nation, we are still working towards a common understanding of traditional governance practices and this process will be ongoing throughout and beyond this Project.

The Committee is working on a strategy to create learning and sharing opportunities and we are open to your suggestions on how we could facilitate this. If you have any thoughts on this topic, please email Jessica at:

[michipicoten@michipicoten.com](mailto:michipicoten@michipicoten.com)

# Leadership Selection

First Nations in Canada select their leadership in one of the following four ways:

1. According to community or custom leadership selection system;
2. Pursuant to the Nation's constitution contained in a self-government agreement;
3. Under the *First Nations Elections Act* and associated regulations, or
4. Under the election provisions of the *Indian Act* and associated regulations.

Michipicoten First Nation elects its Chief and Council pursuant to the *Indian Act*. The Governance Reform Project is aimed at transitioning away from the *Indian Act* and developing a community leadership selection process that align with the Nation's practices and values.

## Why is change being sought?

The *Indian Act* election process does not align with modern or accountable governance. For example, the *Indian Act*:

- Lacks of political accountability — except for the Minister's ability to remove a person from office if there is evidence of corrupt practices in connection with an election or for missing three consecutive meetings of Council without authorization from the Council.
- Sets the term of office for Chief and Council to a two-year term, which carries a heavy financial burden and impacts the Council's ability to confidently plan for the medium to long term.
- Lacks succession planning by allowing mid-term vacancies to remain unfilled.

- Is an imposed system of leadership selection that was intended to promote assimilation and is firmly grounded mid-twentieth century colonial practices.

## What are some of the key features that Council is looking to change?

- Establish candidate eligibility criteria.
- Establish a code of conduct during the campaign period.
- Improve the nomination process.
- Size and composition of Council.
- Fix a longer term of office.
- Establish by-election provisions.
- Establish criteria for removing a Council member from their elected position.
- Remove the Minister of Indigenous Services from the appeals process.

## How will Citizens be engaged?

The Chi-Naanigewin outlines the requirements for developing laws. All laws must be presented and read three times during an open Council meeting and presented at a community meeting. However, the Committee has a more robust engagement process. The Governance Survey is a first step in that process.

Citizens are also being asked to participate in working groups to discuss key topics in more depth and provide input on the Election Law.

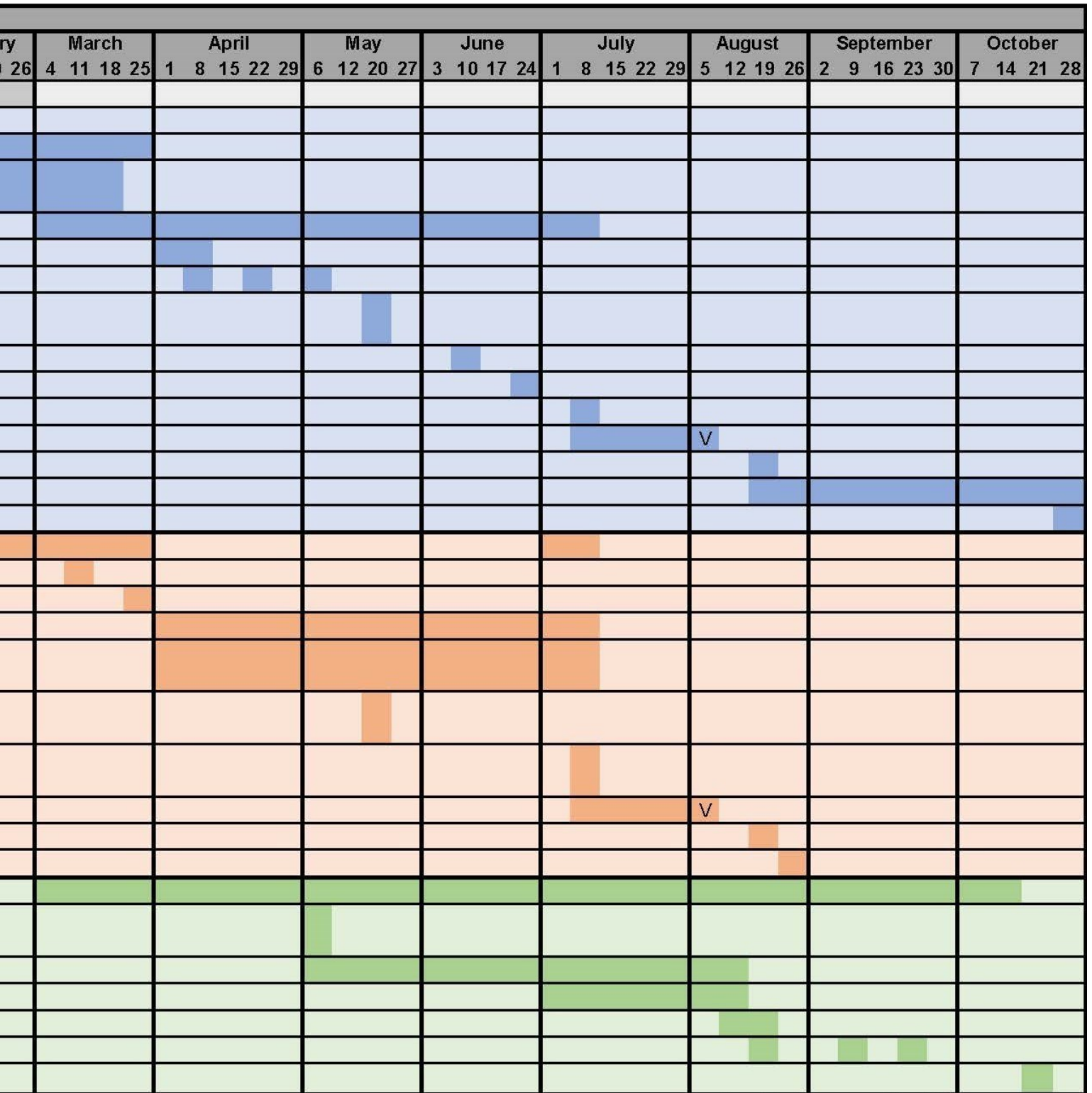
Information about these events can be sought through the Project webpage, on the Nation's calendar of events, through the Nation's weekly flyer and through social media. If you wish to take part in the working groups, please email Jessica at [michipicoten@michipicoten.com](mailto:michipicoten@michipicoten.com)

# Proposed Work Plan for the Governance Reform Project

Document Revision/Creation	General Task	January				February		
		8	15	22	29	5	12	19
	Community survey on desired leadership selection process and governance models							
Election Law	Develop a community referendum process							
	Engagement with ISC re community referendum process							
	Community consultation on desired leadership selection process -- Working group discussions (3 virtual, 1 in person in SSM)							
	Draft Election Law							
	Prepare and Present consultation report to Council							
	Council feedback on draft Election Law							
	Present Election Law and Community Consultation Report at community meeting in Sault Ste. Marie							
	1st reading of Election Law							
	2nd reading of Election Law							
	3rd reading of Election Law							
	Initiate Referendum vote on the adoption of the Election Law							
	Council resolution to adopt the Election Law, if approved							
	Send approved Election Law to ISC for endorsement							
	Community notice of coming into force							
Chi-Naaknigewin	Draft revisions to the Chi-Naaknigewin							
	Council feedback on draft Chi-Naaknigewin							
	Present resolution to Council for amendments to the Chi-Naaknigewin							
	Written community consultation on the Chi-Naaknigewin							
	Community consultation on the proposed Chi-Naaknigewin -- Working group discussions (2 virtual sessions; 1 in-person session)							
	Present proposed amended Chi-Naaknigewin at community meeting in Sault Ste. Marie							
	Present consultation report and proposed revisions to the amended Chi-Naaknigewin to Council for approval							
	Initiate Referendum vote on the adoption of the Chi-Naaknigewin							
	Council resolution to adopt the amended Chi-Naaknigewin, if approved							
Community notice of coming into force								
Council Policy and Procedure	Draft revised Council Policy and Procedure							
	Provisional approval of the draft Council Policy and Procedure by the Special Committee for the purposes of consultation							
	Written community consultation on the Council Policy and Procedure							
	Consultation with staff on the draft Council Policy and Procedure							
	Prepare and present consultation report to Council							
	Council feedback on the draft Council Policy and Procedure							
	Council resolution to approve the amended Council Policy and Procedure							

It is important to highlight that the tasks and timelines set out in the work plan are a guideline and may be adjusted to be responsive to the needs of all stakeholders. Governance Reform Project updates and any revisions to the work plan will be posted to the Project website: <https://michipicoten.com/Citizens-portal/new-governance-reform-project/>

# Finance Reform Project



Last updated: January 11, 2024

Council is aiming to have the amended Chi-Naaknigewin and Election Law ready for a Community referendum vote in August, 2024. If the Citizens vote in favour of adopting the Election Law this summer, the next Council elections in 2025 could be held under Michipicoten's own Election Law.

# Chi-Naaknigewin

In 2018, the Nation's Citizens voted in favour of the adoption of Michipicoten First Nation's first ever Chi-Naaknigewin (Constitution).

## What is a Constitution?

It's a law that empowers and regulates Chief and Council's decision making power. It also outlines the rights of Citizens to participate in the Nation's decision making. Because it establishes the rules for law and decision making, all of the Nations laws and policies must be consistent with the terms and conditions set out in the Chi-Naaknigewin.

## How was the Chi-Naaknigewin developed?

As part of the Anishinabek Nation's restoration of jurisdiction mandates, they encouraged Nations to develop and implement a Chi-Naaknigewin as a first step to creating laws. The Anishinabek Nation had a large role in drafting the content of our current Chi-Naaknigewin. Now that we have had five years to work with the Chi-Naaknigewin, it is clear that there are aspects of the document that are unworkable and need to be amended, particularly provisions that fix timelines.

## What is the amendment process?

The requirements for amending the Chi-Naaknigewin are outlined within the Chi-Naaknigewin. A proposed amendment must first be presented to Council for resolution before a community engagement process is initiated. Community consultation must occur within 90 days of the resolution to adopt proposed amendments. Council will consider the community's input and determine whether to adjust the proposed amendments. A referendum vote must occur within 30 days of the end of community consultations.

## How will community consultation unfold?

There is a planned 15-week consultation period where Citizens can provide their written feedback to the proposed amendments. The proposed amendments will also be presented at a community meeting, which is anticipated to be held in May 2024. There will also be several working group sessions that Citizens can participate in to discuss key topics more in-depth. Stay tuned for Information on the dates of these sessions.

***“Indigenous peoples have the right to self-determination. By virtue of that right they freely determine their political status and freely pursue their economic, social and cultural development.”***

United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People, Article 3

# Council Policy and Procedure

Chief and Council Policy and Procedure establishes standards and expectations for the behaviour of Council members by identifying their roles and responsibilities in the conduct of Council business. This policy document also sets out how Council meetings are conducted by establishing rules of order.

## What are rules of order?

Rules of order in governance play a pivotal role in fostering a structured and effective decision-making process. By providing a framework for conducting meetings, deliberations, and decision-making, these rules ensure that proceedings are fair, transparent, and inclusive. They serve as a common language that enables meeting participants to express their views, engage in constructive debates, and ultimately arrive at well-informed decisions.

The adherence to rules of order enhances the efficiency of governance processes and promotes accountability. In essence, rules of order are the cornerstone of a robust governance system, facilitating the smooth functioning essential for our Nation's success.

## What are some of the key features that Council is looking to update?

The current version of this policy document dates back to 2011, with minor revisions in 2015. However, it is due for an overhaul, particularly since there have been a number of key changes to the Nation's governance framework, such as the adoption of the Chi-Naaknigewin in 2018 and a new Financial Administration By-Law and policies implemented in 2023.

In addition, the 2020 pandemic forced Council to adapt its meeting protocols. However, the policies have not been updated to reflect the

shift to virtual platforms for meetings. There is a need to implement rules of order for virtual participation.

The revisions to the policy will aim to address the following:

- Removing redundancy and eliminating duplication between the policy and procedure and other key governance documents.
- Aligning Council roles and responsibilities with those identified in the Chi-Naaknigewin and the Financial Administration By-Law and policies, and the new Election Law.
- Rules of order, particularly for virtual participation.
- Guidance on information sharing.
- Disciplinary procedures for Council members.

## How can I provide my input on these policy revisions?

The adoption of a revised Council Policy and Procedure is the last phase of the Governance Reform Project. It was planned this way so that Citizen input gathered on the proposed Election Law and amended Chi-Naaknigewin could inform the drafting of the Council Policy and Procedure.

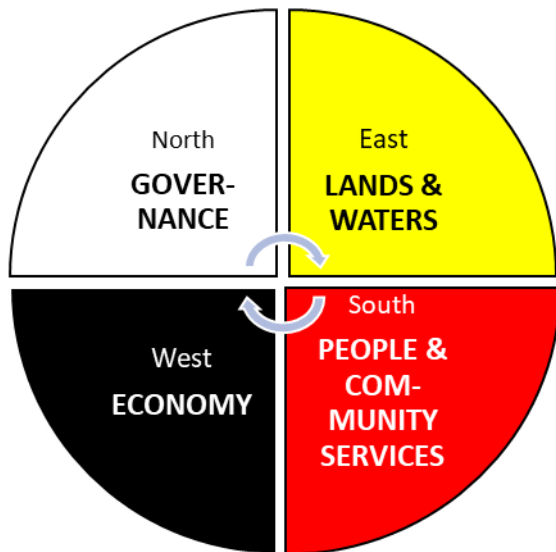
There is a planned 15-week consultation period where Citizens can provide written feedback on the proposed policy document.

There will also be opportunities for Citizens to attend Council meetings where Council will be deliberating on the proposed policy document.

As we navigate the dynamic landscape for our growing Nation, it becomes crucial to underscore the significance of sound governance policies. Throughout this journey, we are guided by our Mission and Values.

**Mission:** We are Anishinaabeg who understand our responsibility to care for our Nation. Under the guidance of Creator, our ancestors, and our history, we walk with our people to *mino-biimaadiziwin* (the good life, the life of wholistic well-being).

Our four foundational areas:



**EAST :** Lead projects and increase our management of our lands and waters

**SOUTH:** Invest resources in our Citizens wherever they are in their journey and for all stages of the life cycle

**WEST:** diversify our revenue sources to sustain our people today and in future generations

**NORTH:** Develop our traditional leadership, upholding the values and standards that our ancestors have held since time immemorial.

## Our Values:

We embrace our traditional Anishinabek teachings, upholding the values and standards our ancestors. We also believe in the following principles;

- **Transparency:** We will be open and honest when sharing information and communicating with our Citizens.
- **Integrity:** The time is always right to do the right thing.
- **Accountability:** We will hold each other accountable, individually and collectively in serving our Citizens.
- **Inclusiveness:** We will strive to include the voices of our Citizens in our decision making and ensure all Citizens benefit equally from programming and services offered by our Nation.
- **Collaboration:** We understand the value of communicating, working with and forming partnerships with various governments, organizations and businesses for the benefit of our Citizens and all of our relations.
- **Fiscal Responsibility:** We will allocate and invest MFN funding and revenue in a wise, prudent, sound, efficient and cost-effective manner.
- **Unity:** We are a Nation of many hearts, with one beat. We promote unity by setting an example. We will work towards no division or animosity amongst our Citizens.



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Governance Reform Project