TEMAGAMI FIRST NATION CHIEFS AND COUNCIL Report from Chief Ayotte

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Kway kway nii-weej-kiiway-wuk! First, I'd like to wish all of you a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!

I'd like to take this opportunity at the year's end to reflect back upon our exceptional community in 2011.

2011 was an election year, my congratulations are extended to all members of Council. TFN Council will be engaging in a strategic planning session first thing in the New Year.

We were fortunate to have Jane Middleton-Moz visit our community for a time during each season of the past year. She has assisted with identifying, acknowledging and addressing historical trauma, and has facilitated a healing process for our community.

We have begun the process to obtain funding for two significant capital projects, an Elder's Complex and a new Government and Administration Office.

Construction of the Elder's Complex will begin in 2012. Council is also in the process of developing an all new housing program to better address our housing needs.

At a community meeting held in June 2011, the community gave the TFN and TAA Councils the authority to negotiate an Impact Benefit Agreement with Northgate Minerals, (see back article for more details). It has long been an objective of our people and

our leadership to reassert our inherent authority over all of N'dakimenan, our ancestral lands, in a dynamic vet dignified way. with integrity, and knowing in our hearts, the truth, that N'dakimenan is our country and together, we have, not just a duty of stewardship, but also an unbroken authority as the original governing power on N'dakimenan. It is with this awareness we have been engaging resource industry proponents that wish to do business on our lands. The continuing negotiations with AuRico Gold (formerly Northgate Minerals) and obtaining a commitment from Canada and Ontario to complete Land Claim negotiations demonstrates this resolve.

This past fall I had the privilege and honour of visiting

the Misabi family grounds and paddling Obabika Lake, along with other community leaders and ethnogeographer and cartographer Craig MaDonald We met with elder Alex Mathias, who brought us up to Shiish'iskon abi'kong, one of our most sacred areas. This was my first visit to this incredible and beautiful little lake. It was a very moving experience, to share the pipe on the very spot where old Wendaban conducted his ceremonies and certainly many who came before him. This short journey for me underscored the need for us to keep up that intimate connection that we have with our lands. A short 2 or 3 day canoe trip this coming summer, to a special and significant part of our territory is being considered, if anyone has a suggestion of a particular



Chief Ayotte discussing canoeing in the Temagami area with Liberal MP Justin Trudeau at the Assembly of First Nations gathering in Ottawa on December 6th.

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I'd like to express my thanks and appreciation to all staff and those who serve on our many committees and volunteer organizations. We have much work to be done and I have been so impressed with the ability of our people to continue to learn and build personal capacity to address the many situations that we face. The work required to develop up-todate policies to adequately address the ever-changing terrain of government legislation, regulation, business and corporations, can at times be challenging. Meegwetch to you all for your hard work.

I recently went to Ottawa to attend the Special Chiefs Assembly of the Assembly of First Nations (AFN). Many long standing issues that still have not been adequately addressed were the main focus, such as education, clean drinking water, housing and the crisis at Attawapiskat. The AFN and the Crown, as represented by Prime Minister Stephen Harper, Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development John Duncan and other representatives are scheduled to meet in Ottawa on January 24, 2012. Many Chiefs are cautiously optimistic that some pro-

gress will be made in terms of "resetting" the relationship with Canada. While in Ottawa an inquiry was made at the Library and Archives regarding some recently identified documents and photographs pertaining to Bear Island and the Temagami area from the 1890s to the 1930s. The information will enhance our understanding of the reality of life for our people during this period. These documents will be made available after we have copies of the material. The Archives is currently preparing the photographic files for our review. We will have these early in the new year.

IMPACT BENEFIT AGREEMENT

In June of this year, the citizens of the Teme Augama Anishnabai and the Temagami First Nation voted and gave direction to the Chiefs and Councils that committed us to work towards concluding an Impact Benefit Agreement (IBA) with Northgate Minerals, a gold mining company that had acquired the former Young and Davidson mine properties near the town of Matachewan, in the north end of N'dakimenan.

Northgate offered a first draft of an IBA in June. Joint Council resolved to retain legal counsel that were experienced, and specialized in IBA development with First Nations as a crit-cal aspect of developing our own response. A number of firms were recommended and considered. The British Columbia based Firm of MacDonald & Company were retained to

review the draft IBA, however, they were unable to commit to further work. The Toronto based environmental law firm of Willms & Shier, were retained in October to consider questions regarding the merger, and have recently signed on to join our IBA team. Juli Abouhcar, a partner at the firm will be our team's legal advisor

Also identified, was the necessity of acquiring a financial professional (who likewise had experience with mining companies), to scrutinize the financial aspects of the developing IBA. Tammy Thompson of BDO joined the IBA team this month. Other members of the team include lead negotiator Dr. Ian Johnson, TFN Chief Roxane Ayotte, TAA Chief John McKenzie and Advisor/Administrator Walter Ross FCA.

Nothgate Minerals became AuRico Gold after a merger between the two companies in October. The senior management of the Young/Davidson project and their IBA negotiating team remain the same.

The Joint Councils became aware of this particular potential merger during the summer. Clarification was sought regarding whether the merger might have an impact on the AIP and IBA process, it was determined that the process may proceed without impediment.

In the days ahead, the IBA team and the Joint Councils will be developing a supplemental budget and agreement for submission to AuRico that will secure the funds required to ensure that the evolving IBA is thoroughly and properly examined and recommend-

ed by our experts. When it is determined that the draft IBA is reflective of the direction provided by the community vote, the final version will be brought to the citizens for ratification. This will likely occur in the spring of the new year.

If you have any questions regarding the IBA process, please contact the Band Office and/or join other citizens in discussion forums online at:

www.ndakimenan.com

HAPPY NEW YEAR!

