



# WINDIGO FIRST NATIONS COUNCIL

## SERVING THE COMMUNITIES OF:

Bearskin Lake First Nation  
Cat Lake First Nation  
Koocheching First Nation  
North Caribou Lake First Nation  
Sachigo Lake First Nation  
Slate Falls Nation  
Whitewater Lake First Nation

## MAILING ADDRESS:

160 Alcona Dr.  
P.O. Box 299  
Sioux Lookout, ON  
P8T 1A3  
Ph: 807-737-1585  
Fx: 807-737-3133

May 23, 2019

## NEWS RELEASE: WINDIGO FIRST NATIONS CHIEFS' COUNCIL REJECT ONTARIO GOVERNMENT PROPOSAL TO REPEAL THE FAR NORTH ACT

SIOUX LOOKOUT, ON: Responding to the Government of Ontario's plan to repeal the Far North Act, 2010—the Windigo First Nations Chiefs Council makes the following statement:

When the *Far North Act* was introduced in 2010, Windigo First Nations Council supported the joint land use planning process. While the *Act* did not meet all of our aspirations, it provided our communities with certainty that development in the far north would be mutually beneficial to First Nations and the province.

*Chief Matthew Keewaykapow, from Cat Lake First Nation has stated: "My community spent more than 10 years developing a land use plan to ensure it captured the manner in which we felt our lands and resources should be developed. We felt comfortable with the protections the Far North Act afforded us. We are now told our plan will be transferred to the Public Lands Act – an Act which serves to police the use of public lands versus protecting our rights as Indigenous peoples. We have not received any information about how this government plans to make this work. At this point, we have more questions than answers, and we are very concerned."*

Previous to the passage of the Far North Act, our people had been denied their Aboriginal and Treaty rights, with numerous conflicts occurring on the ground dating back to the 1960's. Without any legislative protection, we feel our people will be forced once again, to fight for the recognition of their rights.

*Chief Dinah Kanate, from the North Caribou Lake First Nations noted: "When online staking came into effect in 2018, by the next day almost all of our traditional lands had been staked by mining companies – without our knowledge or consent. Without a land use plan and legislative protection we fear our lands will be developed at the whim of industry. We are at a time in our history with Canada where free, prior and informed consent is a legal requirement. If legislated protection is no longer available to us, we will find ways to protect our lands as we have done so for millennium."*

As a signatory to Treaty 9, Ontario has a duty to uphold our Treaty rights. While the WFNC and its member communities work towards full jurisdiction and control – a joint land use planning process where First Nations and Ontario collaborate on resource

development is imperative. If Ontario is to move forward in a positive and constructive manner, First Nations in the north must have a say in how our lands are developed. We must collaboratively and cooperatively develop a way forward. Windigo Chiefs therefore call on Ontario to immediately establish a joint table to discuss amendments and improvements to the *Far North Act*.

This position was submitted to Ontario on Friday, May 10, 2019.

**For further information, contact:**

Frank McKay, Chair and CEO, Windigo First Nations Council at 807-624-8765

or

Anne Chabot, Senior Policy Advisor, Windigo First Nations Council at 416-579-2940



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P.O. Box 299  
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P8T 1A3  
Ph: 807-737-1585  
Main Fx: 807-737-3133  
WTU Fx:807-737-4075

## Background: Windigo First Nations Council

- *The people of the Windigo First Nations have lived on the lands given to us by the Creator since time immemorial.*
- *Our traditional territories are under our jurisdiction and we have a duty to protect and care for our lands.*
- *We are inherently self-governing, and follow the natural laws and the laws of our Creator.*
- *We, the people of the land, declare our Nationhood. We are the government of our territories.*
- *As self-governing Nations, we entered into treaties with the Crown. Canada and Ontario are our Treaty partners.*
- *Our mechanisms of self-government will be determined with the full participation of our people.*

Windigo First Nations Council is a Tribal Council serving the remote northern communities of Bearskin Lake, Sachigo Lake, North Caribou Lake, Cat Lake, Koocheching, Whitewater Lake, and Slate Falls First Nations.

The Windigo Chiefs Council is comprised of the Chiefs of each of our seven member First Nations, and the Council Chair/CEO.

Windigo First Nations Council works to deliver a number of programs and services to our communities (Health, Education, Resource Development, Economic Development, Financial Advisory Services, Musselwhite Program).

Specific services are also delivered by the Windigo Technical Services Unit, to assist our First Nations in their construction, maintenance and public works.