



**INHERENT AND TREATY-  
BASED SELF-GOVERNMENT**

# **WHAT WE HEARD REPORT**

**MARCH 2024**



**MUSKEG LAKE  
CREE NATION**

# INTRODUCTION

As Muskeg Lake Cree Nation continues our journey to Inherent and Treaty-based self-government, we are working to share updates and information through regular community reports. In this What We Heard report, we recap the conversations that took place on self-government during our most recent membership meetings and provide an update on the results from our ongoing community survey on self-government.

## FALL MEMBERSHIP MEETINGS RECAP

On June 13, 2023, we were pleased to sign a Letter of Understanding (LOU) between Muskeg Lake and Canada that will guide our work to formalize our right to Inherent and Treaty-based self-government. During our October and November membership meetings, our team delivered a Priorities and Progress presentation outlining Muskeg Lake's Treaty and Self-governance process with Canada and the steps we have taken prior to and following the signing of a LOU with Canada. This presentation also offered an opportunity to provide an update on the work we have been doing on Muskeg Lake's Recognition of Indigenous Rights and Self-Determination (RIRSD) discussion table with Canada.

To date, our discussions with Canada have focused on six key priorities that will be addressed through Inherent and Treaty-based self-government. These include:

- The MLCN Governance Agreement
- The MLCN Governance Act
- Kotowan Law (CFS)
- Citizenship Act
- Tribunal Act (Dispute Resolution)
- Finance and Administration Act

Those in attendance listened intently and many made statements sharing their personal thoughts and priorities for self-government. Citizens noted the need to ensure that self-government negotiations are never jeopardized with Treaty. They explained that it is critical to ensure the protection of Treaty rights, from a Treaty perspective.

Regarding the funding of our community's priorities, citizens explained that we must ensure the federal government upholds its fiduciary duty to support Muskeg Lake based on our Treaty rights. Citizens noted that there is no need to use our own source revenue to fund priorities that the federal government is responsible because of Treaty, and that we must continue to hold them accountable for these responsibilities.

We would like to thank everyone who attended and participated in our most recent discussions on Inherent and Treaty-based self-government, and we look forward to continuing our conversations at our upcoming membership meetings this year!



# COMMUNITY SURVEY ON SELF-GOVERNMENT

Muskeg Lake is working to ensure the voices of our citizens are reflected each step of the way to Inherent and Treaty-based self-government. In 2023 we began collecting the survey responses of citizens who wanted to share their feedback on the self-government process, and the priorities that we should be working to address as a Nation.

Our survey is ongoing and will remain open to ensure our citizens can always share their thoughts on the self-government process. [Click here to participate in the survey](#), or use the following QR code to access the survey.



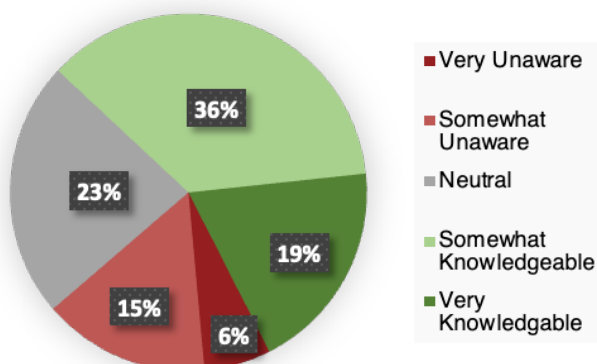
Below is a summary of the feedback we received, and an overview of how we plan to implement that feedback to ensure we make progress on self-government the right way – our way.

## GENERAL THOUGHTS ON SELF-GOVERNMENT

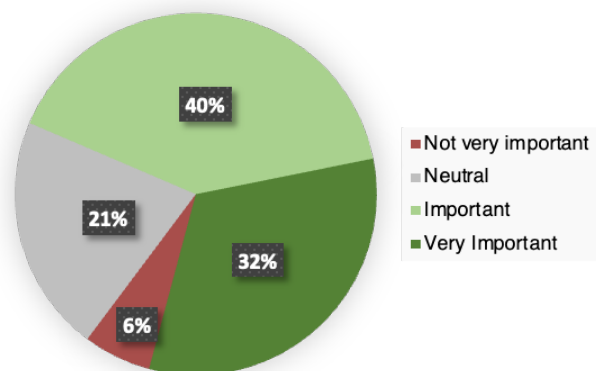
Overall, our survey found that the majority of respondents were already familiar with the self-government process, with 55 per cent saying they were somewhat knowledgeable or very knowledgeable about self-government. While 21 per cent indicated they were somewhat unaware or very unaware of self-government, 23 per cent said they had a neutral understanding of the self-government process.

Our survey also suggests that most respondents believe Inherent and Treaty-based self-government will bring benefits to Muskeg Lake, with a total of 72 per cent of respondents agreeing that self-government is either important or very important for the well-being of our community. Six per cent of respondents said that self-government is not very important for community well-being and 21 per cent had a neutral position on its importance.

How would you rate your understanding of the concept of Muskeg Lake Inherent and Treaty-based self-government?



How important is Muskeg Lake Inherent and Treaty-based self-government for the well-being of the community?



## **PRIORITIES FOR INHERENT AND TREATY-BASED SELF-GOVERNMENT**

Based on our survey, Muskeg Lake citizens anticipate several diverse benefits that will come with self-government. The most common benefit discussed by respondents was that self-government will improve Muskeg Lake's autonomy, and ability to develop laws and reconnect with traditional ways of governing ourselves. Respondents noted that Inherent and Treaty-based self-government will help provide greater financial resources and internal capacity to ensure we are adequately addressing our community's unique needs in a way that aligns with our heritage and values.

Many respondents also highlighted the benefits self-government will have on local economic development and greater career opportunities both on and off-reserve. Respondents also noted that self-government will assist in improving community infrastructure and housing and will enhance our ability to enable and support priorities such as community justice, policing, and childcare.

## **SUPPORTING MUSKEG LAKE CULTURE, LANGUAGE AND TRADITIONS**

Preservation and promotion of our community's culture is a fundamental element of Muskeg Lake's approach to Inherent and Treaty-based self-government. When asked how self-government can better support the preservation of our culture, respondents noted several themes, including the ability to build a shared understanding of what defines our culture which includes language, community values, sports, education, veterans, and their contributions to our community. Respondents see self-government as an avenue to create new opportunities to learn about our language while improving the accessibility of cultural and spiritual activities and events.

Citizens also see self-government as an opportunity to support our Elders in passing on culture, traditions, and language to the next generation. Respondents noted the need to develop youth programming to promote cultural learning through pre-schooling, grade school, and traditional teachings for younger community members. One respondent was quoted stating,

*"I see an opportunity to bring culture back to our community both on reserve and off. I see the opportunity for traditional learning and traditional laws. This is an opportunity for us to know what life looks like for the next seven generations, and an opportunity for us to really focus and assist with the mental health of our membership."*

## **SUPPORTING MUSKEG LAKE CULTURE, LANGUAGE AND TRADITIONS**

While citizens are optimistic about what Inherent and Treaty Based Self-Government may hold for Muskeg Lake, they did recognize challenges that we must address together to create a successful path forward toward self-government.

Many respondents suggested that a lack of financial independence represents a barrier to achieving self-government. They believe there is a need to increase financial independence, and internal administrative capacity, to successfully transition to self-government. Some respondents also see other levels of government as barriers to Muskeg Lake's Inherent and Treaty-based self-government, with concerns that Canada may work to impose a western or colonial approach to self-government that does not align with our community's needs or values. Respondents emphasized that self-government must be done our way, not Canada's way.



Some citizens noted that we lack a common understanding of exactly what Muskeg Lake Inherent and Treaty-based self-government is, and what it means for our community. Respondents acknowledged that many different perspectives on self-government may challenge consensus-building around Muskeg Lake’s approach. Respondents also recognized that the transition to self-government is a long process that will require consistent community support and engagement. It will be critical for Muskeg Lake to keep citizens engaged while ensuring ample opportunities to ask questions and provide input on the self-government process.

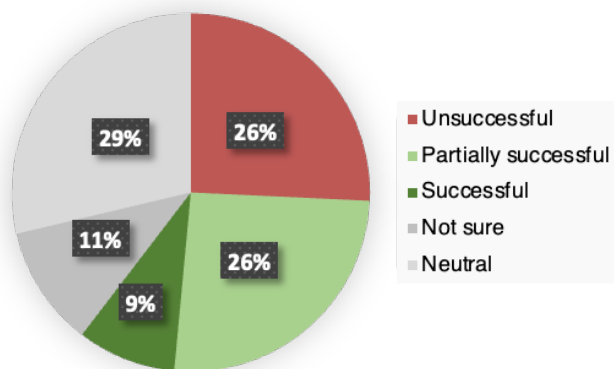
Finally, many respondents emphasized the need to ensure urban community members living off-reserve are included in the self-government process to the same extent as those living on-reserve. Some citizens feel as though urban community members are disconnected or are offered fewer opportunities to inform Muskeg Lake’s approach to self-government based on their own lived experiences and needs. Respondents explained that more must be done to ensure urban members are receiving timely updates on the self-government process and have equal access to learning and engagement opportunities regardless of where they live.

### HOW WE’RE ENHANCING COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

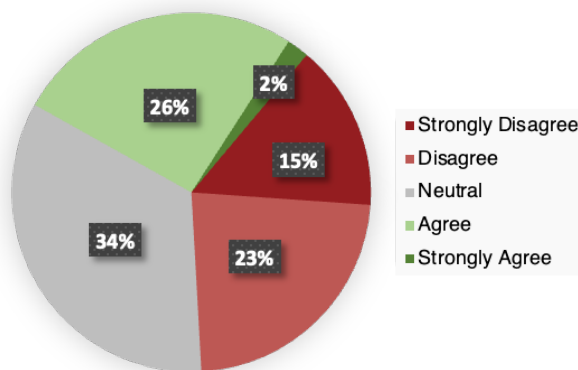
While our survey suggests that awareness of Muskeg Lake’s Inherent and Treaty-based self-government is high among respondents, our citizens are clearly seeking more engagement and learning opportunities on self-government. Thirty-five per cent of respondents found communications on self-government to be successful or partially successful, while 26 per cent found communications to be unsuccessful. Another 40 per cent had a neutral opinion on the effectiveness of communications or were unsure.

Respondents also expressed mixed feelings on how adequately they had been involved in discussions and decision-making on self-government. While 28 per cent of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they had been involved in discussions and decision-making, another 38 per cent disagreed or strongly disagreed that they were actively involved. Thirty-four per cent of respondents had felt neutral about their level of involvement.

How would you rate the current communication of Inherent and Treaty-based self-government in our community?



Do you feel that you have been adequately involved in discussions and decision-making on Inherent and Treaty-based self-government?



When asked how communications and community engagement can be improved, respondents highlighted a need for a combination of in-person outreach, physical communications materials such as flyers and information sheets, and digital communications such as email newsletters. Respondents also emphasized the need to ensure that the distribution of these materials effectively reaches urban community members living off-reserve.



Respondents also noted the need for more educational opportunities, workshops, and breakout sessions where citizens can learn more about the self-government process, as well as key topics such as Treaty and the Indian Act. These activities should not only aim to educate citizens but should also create opportunities for them to share their input on Muskeg Lake's approach to Inherent and Treaty-based self-government.

With members across Canada and around the world, we recognize that Muskeg Lake must be creative in how we communicate with our citizens while ensuring we all have equal opportunities to engage in the self-government process. Going forward, we are working to improve our communications and community engagement with citizens by taking the following steps:

- In 2024, Muskeg Lake will offer more educational opportunities for citizens to learn about Inherent and Treaty-based self-government, with information tables at upcoming events, and dedicated information sessions to discuss key aspects of our approach to self-government.
- Muskeg Lake will be releasing regular progress reports on self-government negotiations with Canada. Reports will provide citizens with an update on negotiations with Canada and will notify upcoming events and opportunities for citizens to provide feedback on the self-government process.
- Muskeg Lake will be releasing regular "What We Heard Reports" following each membership meeting. These reports will summarize feedback received on self-government during the membership meetings while helping to ensure the entire Muskeg Lake membership is up-to-date and aware of the conversations that took place during membership meetings.
- Muskeg Lake will actively use our local radio station to share updates on our path to self-government, including interviews with leadership on our priorities for self-government.
- Muskeg Lake will be releasing a series of informational pamphlets and educational materials on Inherent and Treaty-based self-government, as well as the priorities we will seek to address through the self-government process.
- Muskeg Lake will use the Muskeg Connect Members Portal to provide easily accessible information and resources directly to citizens while working to create a dedicated online space for community discussion on self-government.
- Muskeg Lake will continue to use our social media accounts to share up-to-date information on the self-government process, as well as all upcoming opportunities for community learning and engagement.

As we continue on our journey toward self-government, we look forward to hearing what Muskeg Lake citizens envision for the future of our Nation. We invite you to share your thoughts by taking part in our community survey. [Click here to participate in the survey](#), or use the survey QR code.

We look forward to providing ongoing updates on our path to Inherent and Treaty-based self-government. In the meantime, you can contact us with any questions or comments you have on the self-government process:



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