MUSKEG LAKE CREE NATION

# WHAT WE HEARD REPORT

## UPDATES ON INHERENT AND TREATY-BASED SELF-GOVERNMENT

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# INTRODUCTION

Winter is in full swing, and the past few months have been busy and productive for Muskeg Lake Cree Nation. From our fall membership meetings to ongoing discussions and negotiations with Canada on self-government, the Muskeg Lake team has been hard at work. As we move forward on our journey to Inherent and Treaty-based self-government, we're pleased to share the latest insights from the next iteration of our What We Heard report with the community.

# MEMBERSHIP MEETING RECAP

Our team has had the pleasure of taking part in several community meetings over the past few months, with many more to come. We're committed to working alongside the community as we make progress in developing Inherent and Treaty-based self-government. Your input is essential, and we'll keep you updated on opportunities to connect with our team and be part of the conversation at upcoming events.

In the months of October and November Muskeg Lake held our membership meetings. All four locations—Prince Albert, Saskatoon, Edmonton, and Muskeg Lake—had a great turnout.

Our Self-Government Team was onsite to share progress, answer questions, and have meaningful conversations with community members about our self-government journey. It is always a pleasure to come together, reflect on where we are now, and discuss our vision for the future. In turn, we received incredibly valuable feedback from the community and had the opportunity to engage in informative discussions about Muskeg Lake's self-government process, ensuring that this work continues to be guided by our people.

We want to extend a heartfelt thank you to everyone who took the time to share their thoughts on Inherent and Treaty-based self-government—whether at the meeting or through the survey. Your voices matter, and we truly appreciate your engagement. Through these conversations and survey responses, key topics that came up included citizenship, financial accountability, and the negative impacts of the Indian Act. These discussions are crucial as we navigate this important time in Muskeg Lake's history. Your questions and feedback help guide the path forward, and we look forward to continuing the conversation at future membership meetings and events.

# SELF-GOVERNMENT DISCUSSION TABLES

Our discussion tables with Canada and Saskatchewan continue to serve as vital opportunities to share Muskeg Lake's vision for self-government directly with federal and provincial representatives. These tables enable us to address community challenges and priorities through a framework of Inherent and Treaty-based self-government while ensuring that our voices guide this process.

Over the past five months, significant progress has been made in our negotiations, reflecting the growing momentum in our conversations. Below are updates from our most recent meetings with the Recognition of Indigenous Rights and Self-Determination (RIRSD) Table and the Co-ordination Table.

# RIRSD TABLE

MLCN continues to participate at the RIRSD Table meetings with Canada, where discussions remain focused on transitioning away from the Indian Act and moving toward laws that reflect Muskeg Lake Cree Nation's principles and values, developed in partnership with and approved by our citizens.

In recent meetings, we've made substantial progress in refining the initial draft of our Self-Government Agreement with Canada. Key areas of focus include defining jurisdiction over community priorities like citizenship, child and family services, and governance. Collaborative conversations have been productive, and Canada has shown a willingness to engage meaningfully on many of these issues.

We continue to work toward  broader community consultation process to gather feedback and ensure that the Agreement reflects the aspirations of Muskeg Lake citizens. Stay tuned for updates on consultation dates and opportunities for input.

# COORDINATION TABLE

Muskeg Lake continues to make significant progress on exercising our right to return full control over child and family services to kotawān. This is being done at the the Co-ordination Table which is made up of representatives from MLCN and the governments of Saskatchewan and Canada who meet on a regular basis. The co-ordination agreement ensures this transition is done in a respectful manner that prioritizes the health and wellbeing of Muskeg Lake's families

Supporting the work of our main table are our sub-tables, which meet regularly for in-depth discussions on various aspects of Inherent and Treaty-based self-government. We have submitted a request for data on the number of children in care, as well as their status and the costs associated with their care. Once this information is provided, we will be able to move forward on file reviews to analyze and identify the services currently provided, any gaps in services, and the costs associated with these services in order to move us forward and will benefit the work at all our sub-tables.

Several sub-tables have been created to support this work, including:

- **The Transition Sub-Table:** discussions are underway on the components of our child and family services law that need to be in place in order to successfully transition these services. Recently, our team delivered a presentation on the role of the Public Guardianship to this sub-table.
- **The IT and Data Sub-Table:** Discussions at this table are currently taking place on the principles of data ownership, control, access and possession (OCAP). These principles assert Muskeg Lake's ability to collect, own and use our data as we see fit. This sub-table is also discussing questions surrounding Privacy Laws and Privacy Officers, and electronic client records.
- **The Fiscal Sub-Table:** We continue to work on what our funding needs will be over the course of the agreement and are working towards getting relevant demographic (present and future) information reon order to move forward.
- **The Capital Sub-table:** The building design option has been submitted and funds are under approval for the project. Information is currently being gathered which will support this feasibility study for the project. We have been approved to purchase an interim kotawan office that will have running water and space to meet our current and immediate future needs while the permanent building is built.

# KOTAWĀN Updates

kotawān has been actively conducting off-reserve file reviews and connections to the families from Muskeg Lake to assist with cultural plans, family connections and planning visits in and out of the community to re-unite families. This is both in the province of Saskatchewan and out of province across Canada. We have been steadily connecting with the various Ministries to identify the families from Muskeg Lake to offer our support for family connections, cultural plans, court processes, et cetera.

We are also currently awaiting the results of our initial program evaluation of the Demonstration Prevention Project. Once complete, this evaluation will give us valuable information on gaps in services and ways of improving our kotawān programming and services.

Kotawān integrates various programs to support our families. Under the Progressive Model Project with Saskatoon Tribal Council, our main prevention and intervention program has been active with community-based camps like Culture, Art and Music, Family, and Literacy Camps, as well as external camps such as Redberry, Big River, and Bosco Wilderness Survival. It also supports swimming lessons, parenting programs, Equine Therapy, and case plan interventions.

# How We're Engaging Community Members

Community engagement is crucial to ensuring our path to self-government reflects the needs and best interests of our Nation. Below are some of the ways the MLCN team is working to involve our community in self-government discussions:

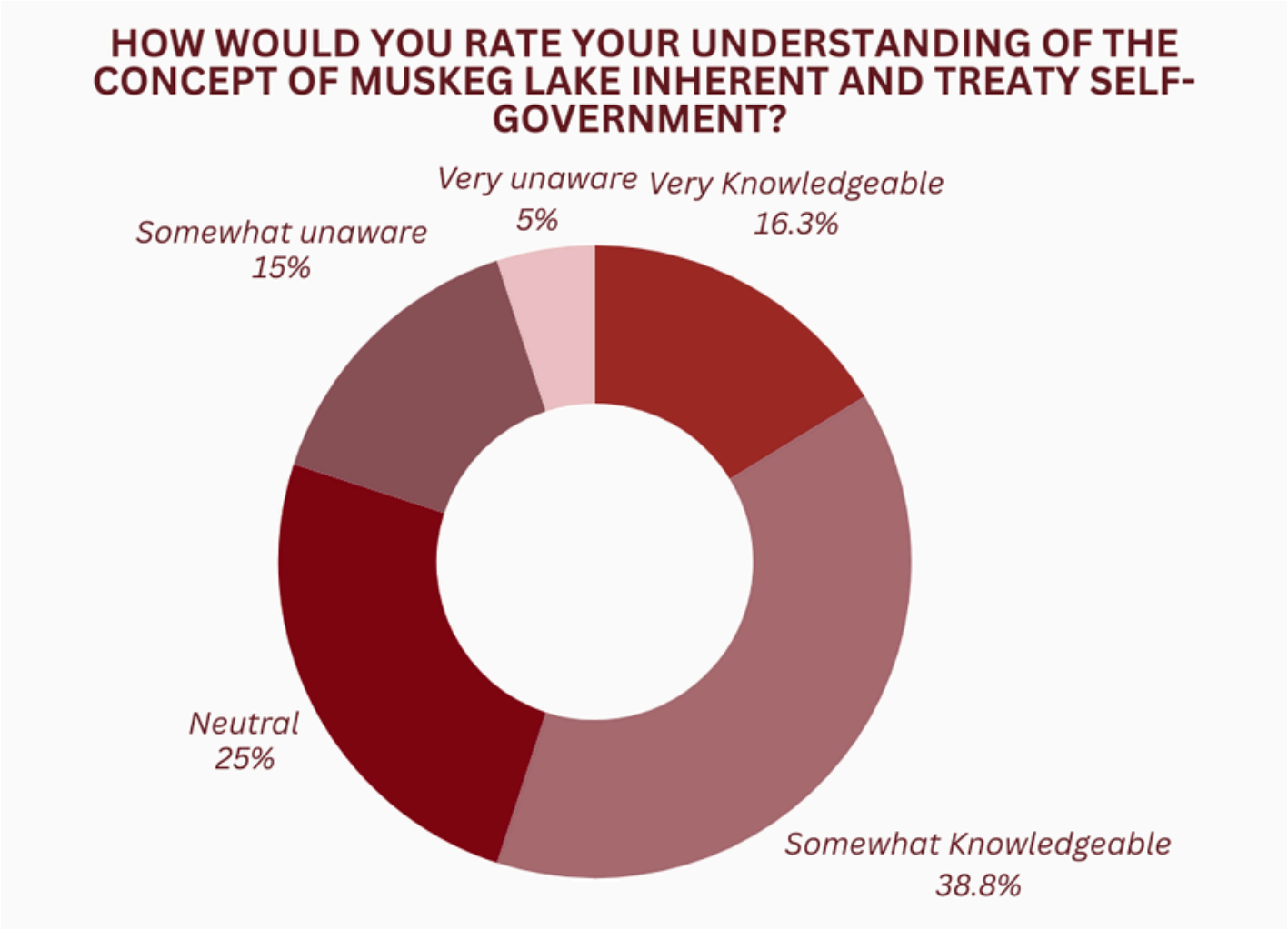
1. We continue to directly work with the Elders Committee to share our Nation's vision for Muskeg Lake self-determination and to receive their input on our path to Inherent and Treaty-based self-government.
2. Our recent presentation was on October 2024.
3. Our team is working with the Language Group on elements and guiding principles in Cree law and traditional governance as well as translation needs.
4. Our team works with the membership committee to discuss genealogy and a path forward related to citizenship needs.
5. We are committed to providing regular updates to the community. We are exploring new ways to communicate with Muskeg Lake citizens that we have not engaged in yet, including through radio advertising on our local station.

## *CITIZEN SURVEY RESULTS*

From the most recent responses to our citizen survey on Inherent and Treaty-based self-government, we've gained additional insights into how Muskeg Lake citizens perceive their understanding of this critical process. Here are the key takeaways from this latest round of feedback, as illustrated in the pie chart below:

- A majority of citizens report being knowledgeable: Over half of respondents (55.1%) consider themselves either "Somewhat Knowledgeable" (38.8%) or "Very Knowledgeable" (16.3%) about self-government. This reflects continued positive awareness and engagement.
- Neutral responses remain significant: 25% of participants describe their understanding as neutral, highlighting an opportunity to deepen engagement and provide further clarity on key aspects of self-government.
- Room for growth: Approximately 20% of respondents indicate they are "Somewhat Unaware" (15%) or "Very Unaware" (5%), showing the need to address gaps in understanding through targeted communication and educational initiatives.

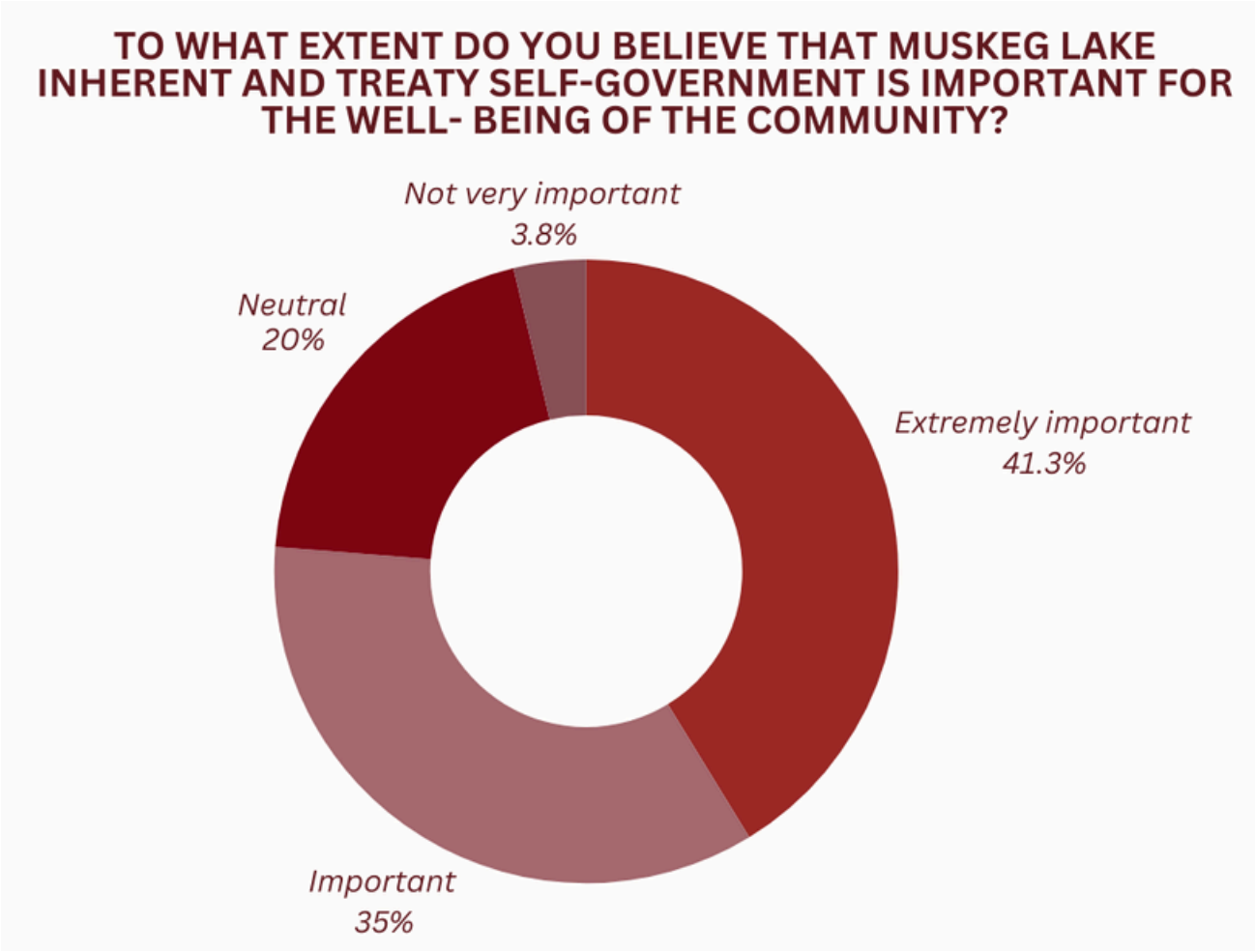
The accompanying pie chart provides a clear visual representation of these findings, emphasizing both the strengths and opportunities for improvement in citizen understanding of Muskeg Lake's self-governance journey.




Survey responses demonstrate a strong consensus among Muskeg Lake Cree Nation citizens regarding the significance of Inherent and Treaty-based self-government for the well-being of the community. Here's what the data reveals:

- A clear majority value self-government: 76.3% of respondents view it as either "Extremely Important" (41.3%) or "Important" (35%), highlighting widespread recognition of its role in the community's future.
- Neutral perspectives: 20% of respondents remain neutral, indicating room for further engagement and education to deepen understanding of self-government's benefits.
- Minimal disagreement: Only 3.8% of respondents consider self-government "Not Very Important," demonstrating limited opposition or uncertainty about its relevance.

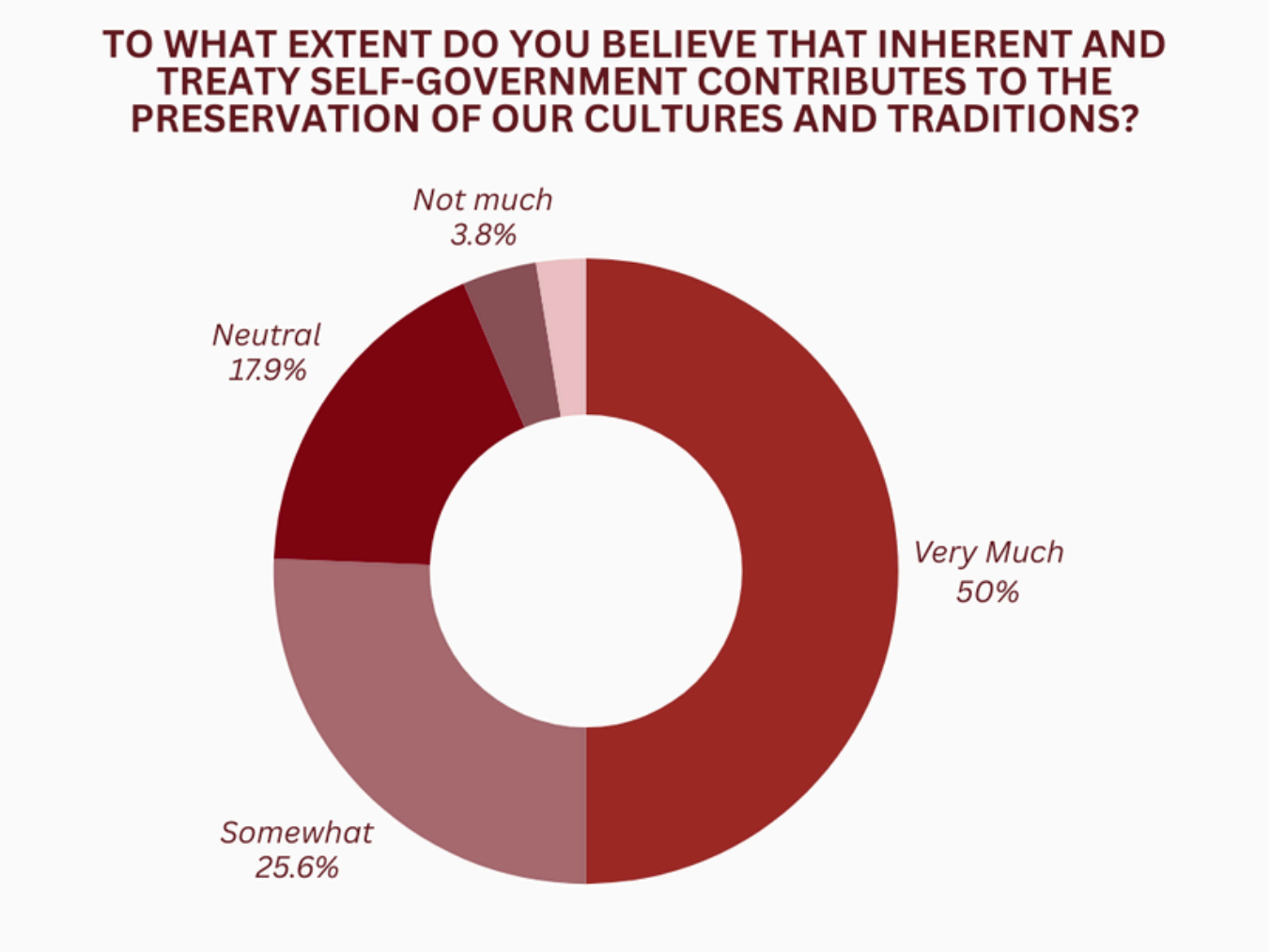
These findings underscore the strong collective support for advancing Muskeg Lake's self-government initiatives, while also pointing to opportunities to engage those who may feel neutral or uncertain about its importance.




We continue to see strong agreement among Muskeg Lake Cree Nation citizens that Inherent and Treaty-based self-government is essential for preserving our cultures and traditions. Key insights from the survey include:

- Majority support: Half of the respondents (50%) believe self-government contributes "Very Much" to the preservation of Muskeg Lake's cultural identity, with an additional 25.6% stating it contributes "Somewhat."
- Neutral responses: 17.9% of participants remain neutral, suggesting an opportunity to further communicate the cultural significance of self-government.
- Minimal disagreement: Only 3.8% of respondents feel that self-government contributes "Not Much" to cultural preservation, indicating limited skepticism within the community.

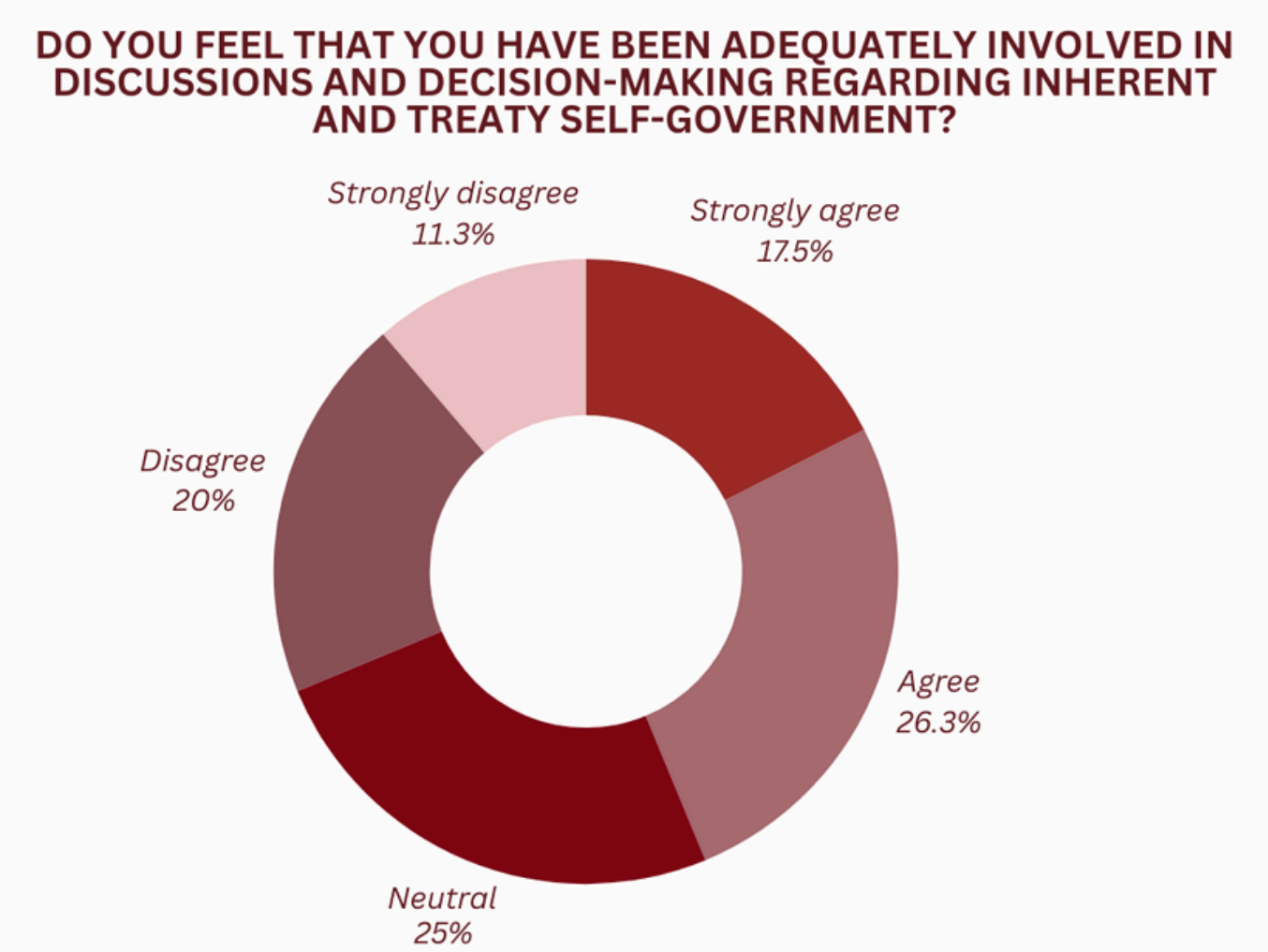
These results highlight the ongoing recognition of self-government as a critical tool for maintaining and strengthening cultural identity, while also identifying opportunities to engage with neutral respondents to broaden understanding and support.




Community participation in discussions and decision-making on Inherent and Treaty-based self-government is on the rise. A comparison of recent survey results with previous data reveals a positive shift in engagement perceptions.

- Greater agreement: The latest survey indicates that 43.8% of respondents either "Agree" (26.3%) or "Strongly Agree" (17.5%) that they feel adequately involved. This marks a significant increase from the previous 32%, highlighting growing confidence in engagement efforts.
- Neutral responses decline: While 25% of respondents remain neutral, this is an improvement from the earlier 31%, suggesting more individuals are finding clarity or taking a position on their level of involvement.
- Reduced disagreement: The proportion of those who "Disagree" or "Strongly Disagree" has dropped from 37% to 31.3%, signaling a decline in dissatisfaction and a step forward in ensuring broader participation.

These findings indicate that efforts to enhance communication and inclusivity in decision-making are making an impact. However, there is still room to continue bridging the gap for those who remain neutral or feel uninvolved in the process.




While views on Inherent and Treaty-based self-government are generally positive, we continue to see a split citizens' feelings on their involvement in decision making on self-government. While 32 per cent of respondents agree or strongly agree that they have been adequately involved in discussions and decision making, 37 per cent feel as though they have not been adequately involved.

Our community survey remains open for all Muskeg Lake citizens who would like to share their thoughts on Inherent and Treaty-based self-government. scan the QR code below to complete the survey.

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.

# HAVE QUESTIONS? LET US KNOW!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