

Williams Treaties Update November 2017

For WTFN Community Newsletters

The Annual General Assembly was held in Rama First Nation at Casino Rama on October 21, 2017. The event attracted close to 200 participants from the seven First Nations. The negotiating team provided a review of the accomplishments to date, an overview of the status of the negotiations and a projected timeline through the spring of 2018.

Due to the sensitive nature of the negotiations at this time, we are unable to provide details about the presentations. Members attending the meeting signed confidentiality agreements which bound them to protect the information. This is not intended to prevent members from being informed but rather, to ensure that details of the negotiations are not published in media reports, on social media or other public forums. We are also hoping to reduce the spread of incorrect information and the speculation that may arise. Please contact any member of your Chief and Council with your questions if you were unable to attend the meeting.

As you have been advised, the Williams Treaties litigation is currently adjourned and negotiations began on February 17, 2017. In the Framework Agreement, Williams Treaties First Nations, Canada and Ontario agreed on four pillars for the negotiated settlement:

- Constitutional recognition of harvesting rights
- Additional reserve lands
- Provision of financial compensation
- Reconciliation

Once the Framework Agreement was signed by all parties in the spring, harvesting rights for food, social and ceremonial purposes were recognized in Pre-Confederation Treaties 5, 16, 18, 20, 27 and 27½. This is a significant achievement and one which will enable our communities to return to ancestral harvesting areas. A detailed map is located on the website at www.williamstreatiesfirstnations.ca or contact communications@williamstreatiesfirstnations.ca. Some of the boundaries for these treaties remain under discussion so please contact us if you are unsure about the area you are planning to harvest. More information on harvesting is being addressed in a separate update.

Your leadership is holding the Crowns, Canada and Ontario, to a tight timetable for negotiations. In the early spring, it is anticipated that a settlement will be concluded which will set the stage for a ratification process to begin. We will continue to provide updates and encourage members to speak to their leadership for more information.