

Citizenship Within Wahta Update



The citizenship meetings are ongoing, many who have attended and reached out through email etc. have a great deal of passion and emotion. The discussions are vital in understanding that the community of Wahta exists with a strong history of survival, community and pride. Understanding the

perspective of the; youth, parents, non-indigenous spouses, traditional longhouse and others is vital as the process moves along.

Watch for a complete survey that will be sent to all Wahta members in February. Once this is complete we will be holding one-on-one personal interviews and discussion through online formats as well.

Next Citizenship Meeting Feb 17th

Next Meeting is Saturday Feb 17th 10am – 4pm at the Cultural Healing Centre.

***Child minding is available for the duration of the meeting on a first come, first serve basis, spots are limited. Please register for child minding no later than Feb 12th at info@wahtamohawks.com or call all 705-762-2354 ext. 256**

We are asking for ongoing input into what the future means for Wahta and how we can ensure that Wahta's roots stay strong and that our community thrives.

Every month we will include portions of our most recent legal opinion by Attorney Alisa Lombard as well as some older legal opinions presented over the past 20 years. There are some consistent themes that have long since been recognized as problematic with the membership code.

2017 Legal Opinion

Citizenship Rules & Inconsistencies

Under the Code, anyone who was entitled to Indian status before the Code, or with two parents who are entitled to status, is a citizen of Wahta.

Otherwise, a combination of blood quantum and ancestry is required: for natural (non-adopted) children, one must have a parent who was entitled to status and at least a quarter of Mohawk blood. Adopted children have different rules. They may acquire citizenship only if they have 25% Indian blood quantum, which need not be Mohawk blood.

The Code also bars citizenship for those who acquired Indian status through marriage and their descendants, and anyone who gave up their status through the voluntary enfranchisement provisions of the Indian Act.

There are two important inconsistencies in the membership provisions. First, the rules for blood purity are inconsistently applied. There is a lower threshold of blood quantum for adopted over naturally born children. Second, excluding those who enfranchised is inconsistent with giving citizenship to all those entitled to status before the 1987 Code, as some of those who enfranchised were entitled to have their status restored by Bill C-31 in 1985.

Watch for more legal opinion excerpts in the coming months.

The full legal opinion can be downloaded at:

www.wahtamohawks.com/citizenship/

Summary

Some of the issues we face on an ongoing basis include: status vs. non-status, off reserve vs. on reserve members, and blood quantum comparisons all perpetuated by the Indian Act. Many citizens of Wahta Mohawks live away from their home territory, this should not affect the collective rights of the nation, every member

counts. The role of non-member spouses and children is also important, how can we support and encourage everyone in the community and their families?

What are the impacts on children and grandchildren?

How would you like to see the future of Wahta for you and your children and grandchildren?

What are the most important values and principles that should be reflected in our own Wahta citizenship code?

Part of the process is to determine and define the agreed upon criteria. Such criteria to consider may include:

Descendants, Lineage, Blood Quantum, Tradition, Language, Duties and Responsibilities as members, Residency, History, Clans, Marriage, Adoption etc.

Chief and Council have the responsibility in the collective decision making process to ensure that the citizenship code, roles and responsibilities reflect the values of Wahta Mohawks and its members. This process will include identifying key decision points, being respectful of other points of view, facilitating and creating a safe place for ongoing discussion.

Please direct any questions or comments to info@wahtamohawks.com

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