

Serpent River First Nation to Continue Land Referendum Process

(Wednesday, October 5, 2011) Yesterday, in a very clear majority of total votes cast, Serpent River First Nation will be required to continue their referendum process to have lands set aside for the purpose of economic development in their community.

Out of 222 votes registered in the community land referendum process, 76.5% of voters agreed to set aside lands for the purpose of a head-lease to be held by its Economic Development Corporation. Unfortunately, the band was short on the total amount of required votes casted in the first round.

Under the federal governments "*Indian Act*" process the band must have a majority of its total membership casting a vote in the first round, which was 365. This number was short in total, but in an unprecedented outcome, 89% of total voters were community residents. Out of 160 on-reserve voters, approximately only twenty on-reserve people did not cast votes.

"This process was an excellent indication that over three quarters of our members who voted want to proceed with the establishment of a light industrial park and head-lease for the purpose of economic development," says Chief Isadore Day, *Wiindawtegowinini* of Serpent River First Nation.

The next step for the band council is to pass a resolution continuing to the next part of the process, which will now only call for a simple majority of total votes casted. This is expected to be a very short and much simpler process.

"We intend to continue to reach out to all members regardless of place of residency," says Day, "it is not just a matter of obtaining a simple majority vote of our on-reserve members, its a matter getting buy-in and acceptance from our members no matter where they are." The Chief goes on to say, "it is vital that off-reserve members have a say in the processes that take place on their homeland. Many of our citizens live away from the community for career reasons, education as well, many intend to come home to retire or relocate – we cannot exclude anyone from having a say."

The Serpent River First Nation is quite confident that a successful vote is a high probability in the next step of the referendum process, which will be formalized within the next couple of weeks. The Chief indicated that they expect to have this process wrapped up by the end of December. This will allow the community to proceed with implementing their economic development goals and provide a place for light industrial to take place on their lands.

-30-

For more Information contact:

Melissa Chesterfield, Communications Specialist Serpent River First Nation
(705) 844-2418 – melissac.srfn@ontera.net