

Naskapi Constitution Working Group

2022-2023

ANNUAL

REPORT

Subjects Discussed



- 01 Naskapi Values & Principles**
- 02 Governance & Government**
- 03 Education**
- 04 Communication & Transparency
- 05 Fundamental Rights
- 06 Dispute Resolution
- 07 Elders
- 08 Relations with Other Nations
- 09 Spirituality & Tradition
- 10 Non-Naskapi Participation

History



The development of the Naskapi Constitution is part of an overall process of advancing **Naskapi Self-Governance**.

A Naskapi Constitution will set out **the most important rules of governance**, as well as **the values and principles that will guide Naskapi institutions**.

Since October 2022, a **Naskapi Constitution Working Group** was created and has held monthly meetings to discuss and develop the proposed content of a future Naskapi Constitution. **Participation in these meetings is open to all Naskapi community members!**

Here are some key insights that have surfaced during our recent meetings. **It's important to note that the following content will not automatically be added to the Naskapi Constitution but serves as a foundation to stimulate discussions within the broader community!**

1 Naskapi Values & Principles

SOME IDEAS

- Language is at the heart of the Naskapi identity and is a constant concern in the Working Group's discussions. **Measures must be taken to preserve our language.**
- Stories about the land are very important to the Naskapi identity. **They must be highlighted in the Constitution to ensure they are remembered.**
- Respect – Resilience – Wisdom – Honor – History – Caribou-Nomads – Bravery – Confidence – Teachings – Territory – Ancestors – Children – Grandchildren – Community – Knowledge.

2 Governance & Government

SOME IDEAS - PART 1

- Naskapi leaders, especially the Chief, should **speak Naskapi**.
- It is important that **youth be represented in the Naskapi government**, either as Councillors or on a youth committee.
- Naskapi committees' rules, including composition and rules of appointments, must be **accessible and clear**. They must be **accountable** and there must be **consequences for non-compliance**.
- **Committees must publish minutes of their meetings.**
- Council's relation with the committees must be clear and respected. **Council may override the committee's decisions only if clearly authorized to do so.**
- **Conflicts of interest** were frequently brought up when discussing the functioning of committees.

2 Governance & Government

SOME IDEAS - PART 2

- **The notion of family could be included in governance rules** to prevent family members from sitting on Council or committees together.
- Certain or all councillors should be **dedicated full-time to their role**. As the population grows, so should the **composition of Council**.
- The absence of a **mechanism to deal with conflicts of interest** makes the community less trusting of its government.
- The discussions revealed the importance of having a **neutral and independent mechanism or institution to monitor the actions of the Naskapi government**.
- There must be a **clear and accessible procedure for reporting a situation**.
- Few people know the **Cree-Naskapi Commission**, its commissioners or what they do. The Commission makes a written report every two years, but does not come in person to explain it. It is not perceived as effective.

3 Education

SOME IDEAS

- It is essential that the community, and especially students, be better informed about the **Nation's governance rules and laws**. There must be **greater publicity and transparency** regarding these rules and laws.
- The constitution process must be accompanied by an **information and education campaign** before the referendum.
- To set up new political structures and make them work, we need to be better informed and educated about the **Nation's political history** and **how the Nation currently works**.
- It is important that **children learn more than just the provincial education program**. They should also receive a **Naskapi education**, which can only be taught by being on the land. This important aspect of their education should be recognized by the Government of Quebec (Ministry of Education).
- **Language should be central in the program.**

4 Communication & Transparency

SOME IDEAS - PART 1

- **Increasing the accountability** of Councillors and committee members is a constant concern.
- There must be **greater transparency** and **communication** regarding the respect of the Code of Ethics and conduct of the Councillors.
- **Written minutes** of all Council meetings, community assemblies, committee meetings, etc. **should be kept and accessible**. Access to information is central in our discussions.
- The community should have easy **access to all public information** and **documents**. Access to information is lacking and needs to be improved.

4 Communication & Transparency

SOME IDEAS - PART 2

- **Minutes of meetings or assemblies should be followed up at the next meeting or assembly.**
- **Elders should receive specially prepared follow-ups**, so that they understand the issues.
- There should be **more people working at the radio** given its important role in the community. The radio needs to regain an important place in the community.
- **There is a constant concern that everyone's voice be heard.**

5 Fundamental Rights

SOME IDEAS

- **The right to information is central to the discussions.**
- It has come to light through discussions that there are significant concerns regarding **the state of freedom of expression** within the community. The importance of better protecting and promoting freedom of expression was central in the discussions.
- The **fear of speaking out** because of potential reprisals, such as job loss or harassment, was a constant theme in the discussions.
- **No one should fear reprisals for expressing their political opinion.**

6 Dispute Resolution

SOME IDEAS

- Naskapis should have easier access to a **neutral and independent dispute resolution body** (instead of courts of justice).
- For criminal matters, there is an interest in **creating a justice committee** to propose alternatives to the mainstream justice system.

7 Elders

SOME IDEAS

- It is proposed that some Elders be members of the Council, or that an official **Elders' Council** be created and **be part of the government.**
- **The Committee does not want a symbolic or “token” role for Elders.** They need to be truly consulted on all matters.
- Regular meetings should be held with Elders to discuss various issues.
- **Elders should have a central role in preserving our language.**

8 Relations with other Nations

SOME IDEAS

- Discussions revealed a desire for **more communication** and **collaboration** with Indigenous Nations with whom the Naskapi Nation shares **overlapping traditional territory**.

9 Spirituality & Tradition

SOME IDEAS

- **Spirituality did not emerge as a major component to be included in the Constitution.** Some said that it should not be included. Others said it is an important to talk about Naskapi spirituality as part of a larger discussion around Naskapi culture. This is a matter for further discussion.
- **Impacts on Naskapi sprituality resulting from colonization, including religious institutions such as the church, need to be acknowledged.**

10 Non-Naskapi Participation

SOME IDEAS

- **There is a reluctance to have non-Naskapis vote at the election or on any matters.** This issue needs to be explored further.
- **The constitution must focus on the Naskapi Nation and its preservation.**
- Non-Naskapis who come to work or live in the community should have **training sessions on Naskapi culture.**

We want to hear from you!



Send in your comments **anonymously** about the 2022-2023 Annual Report and its content on our website: www.nnkengagement.ca.

Looking to get involved?

Join the **Naskapi Constitution Working Group** during their monthly meetings!

Just keep an eye out on Facebook or on the Naskapi Radio for the time & place.