

Position Paper – Bonnie Goodchild – 2017 Biigtigong Nishnaabeg Election

Booshoo Kinnawii! I begin by saying Miigwetch to the person who nominated me for the 2017 Biigtigong Nishnaabeg Election. Further, I wish to thank all of you for your tremendous support you have shown me in the past years. Thank you for putting your trust into me. The past 8 years has been welcoming.

For those of you who may not be totally informed, I would like to outline my position by reflecting on the accomplished tasks and priorities that benefitted our membership. This is a display of my capability, my integrity, my accountability and my dedication to the community and its members.

PRDC's purpose is a community based venture and was developed to promote Biigtigong Nishnaabeg's economic and social development for our members. Developed in 1983 as a logging operation, the Corporation has been through many great accomplishments. I began as General Manager in 2014 and in those 3 years, we have made a 360 degree turnaround for the organization. I wish to acknowledge my wonderful staff that work with me and share in this great accomplishment.

The Band saw the importance of separating economic ventures from the governance of the community, therefore, my first task was the Barrick contract. Over a one-year period, I negotiated with Barrick for an End of Life contract which will see 18 of our members in full time employment as long as the mine continues to operate. This agreement was signed in March 2015 at which time PRDC took over the administering of the contract. A lot of new employees were hired, some moved on with the company with PRDC as the stepping stone for their permanent status with Barrick. This transfer also allowed for employee benefits and job security for the employees. There was no negotiated contract prior to this. It was a long process but all worth the effort.

Profits from the Labour Services are invested directly into the community. In the past year, we have built a much needed storage garage for equipment. My goal is to build on that equipment that will see more opportunities and employment for the membership. Other investments in our community include a sacred fire arbour for our school and traditional programming, 72K was provided for the church renovations, and 100k was donated towards the development of the new school, a real investment in our children. Currently under construction at the Turtle Lodge, is a kitchen, a washroom and a sweat lodge shelter. The Turtle Lodge is used monthly by our school children therefor the need for the support there. Again, an investment in our children. Programs involving our children continue to be a priority for me as we participate in and contribute towards Fish Camp, Moose Camp, Aboriginal Day, Powwow, etc.

PRDC has invested approximately 200K in much needed upgrading to our cable and internet systems. This is a direct benefit to our community and our departments that utilize the PRDC services.

In the past few months, I have been meeting with Pukaskwa, trying to ensure our members are being considered for opportunities that come available. I strongly advocate that our members should be 50% of the workforce there. I am your voice at these tables.

The ratification of our Gchi-Naakniigewin with our last elections is the first step towards self-governance. This empowers you, our membership, in determining how we should be governed as a community. People recognize that there is a need for consistency and transparency. Through consultation and community participation, the law making becomes your process. It is through your input and your voice that we can shape our governing structure.

With the ratification of the Biigtigong Nishnaabeg Gchi-Naaknigewin (constitution), we now have the ability to govern ourselves. Having our own Gchi-Naaknigewin recognizes us as a governing body. Our first huge accomplishment was Anishinabek Education System. Because we had our constitution in place, we were able to vote in favor of jurisdiction of our education. On August 16th, Biigtigong Nishnaabeg were a part of an historic event. We signed the largest self-governing document in Canada. This gives us control over the funding for education and gives us the ability to determine what is taught and how we teach. Children learn who they are by understanding of their roots – their family, their traditions, culture, history and community. I support our education staff in the development of our own curriculum, a curriculum that defines who we are as Anishinabe, a curriculum that encompasses the well-being of each child. I offer my commitment to help by whatever means possible, to the continued growth of our children and our education. Although I am not a formal member of the Education committee, I attend their meetings and have travelled a few times to the AES sessions. It was a very exciting time when we voted in favour of the AES ratification. This a huge accomplishment towards self-governance.

We, as a community, can determine so much, but we need your input. Be conscious of the notices that come out in the community. This is your opportunity for input.

I will continue to prioritize our membership and work hard at obtaining and advancing opportunities for our people.

I am a strong believer in “Our way of Life” and that is how I live my life, through the 7 teachings. They are the foundation of where I am today, personally. My upbringing from my parents taught me hard work, perseverance, honesty, wisdom and most importantly, love. I believe in these teaching and I strive for this for our children and youth.

I have served 8 years on Council and I wish to say that I totally enjoy and continue to commit to the advancement and new developments for the Biigtigong Nishinabeg. My 8 years has given me so much knowledge on the very critical issues that we will be facing over the next years, land claim, membership code, election code. So many exciting things are evolving as we move forward.

Miigwetch Kinnawiia, and I wish all candidates the best in the upcoming election.