



Boozhoo Biigitigong members, on and off reserve, I would like to thank those who nominated me for position on council for 2017. I would like the opportunity again to be your voice sitting on council, there is still very much to learn. I sat on council for a brief period in 2013 until obtaining employment at which time caused a conflict of interest. I've worked for the past 30 years, I am educated and I have experience in leadership, teaching as an instructor, public speaking and some co- management position during that time. I believe I can bring a good balance of overall experience and I'm still at an age to be that honest voice for many years. I've now been a permanent resident raising my family here for the last 15 years.

There has been much accomplished in Biigitigong in the last 30 plus years. There can be substantially more in the upcoming years. The experience of chief and council and approval of members have made significant progress and there is always ways to improve to make our community better as a whole.

We express the importance of our youth and future generations. They will be the ones making the important decisions in years to come. Properly guiding our youth today has to be one of the biggest challenges and difficult of jobs. We do our best to teach them and provide them with a good life. I often wonder how good of a role model they observe, am I setting a good example? How well are they following that good example?

I'm not going to sugar coat anything and honestly life at times can be different from what others may see. There have been challenges in the recent months, I have just done a 6 month follow up from a major surgery and the outlook is excellent. I've learned that perseverance, a strong work ethic can and being positive can get you through life's toughest obstacles. I've had some great guidance in my younger years and continue to listen to that guidance today. Listening to your parents and elders is so important and I hope that what we teach is getting through.

I would like to be more involved in land based teachings that we deliver to our Biigitigong youth. Many of us as parents and elders practice harvesting off the land and do our best to pass that valuable knowledge on to the youth. Quite honestly, I hope that interest will eventually get stronger with the youth including my own. We always teach to respect the land and water, live traditional ways and practice our culture. I know very little of our Ojibwe language and want to learn more, I live my traditional way hunting, fishing and trapping and I do respect my culture and would like to practice it more. My younger son has danced a few years as a grass dancer and we have all been given our spirit names. I highly respect who we are as people, and teach my sons to respect, offer tobacco and give thanks to the creator for what is provided to us from the land and water. The 7 teachings are what make us decent human beings, if every race followed those teachings the world would be a better place.

We are in the day and age of social media, screens and online gaming etc, it seems everywhere you look we see many youth and adults staring at a screen. Don't get me wrong, a tablet or smart phone has become a very useful and resourceful tool however there must be some balance, we got by without it before. We must also be careful with social media in regards to important issues that can potentially benefit our community. I myself have a smart phone and do my best to limit time it has also been quite challenging setting limitations of screens in my own household.

Chief Michano clearly stated "We don't want them to know what we are thinking." especially ones who can possibly oppose the potential benefits to our community. Our community as a whole will all be on the same page in these important issues, no decision will be made without consultation from the membership. Our community membership will always have the final say in important matters. This is Chief Michano's philosophy and that is something I've always believed in. My belief in what we do as leaders must be always for the betterment of the community membership on and off reserve. One of our 7 teachings is humility, never to look down on anybody and everyone matters.

Here are some issues that will always be important for the overall betterment of Biigitigong. There is still very much to learn on many issues. Learning and becoming familiar with these issues for the overall benefit of our community and the future generations is an ongoing process. Sitting in council and being a voice at the table is important in that process. When I sat at the council table, I would often ask questions on possible opportunity and operations and how it would benefit our membership. I think it is important to have a clear understanding that Biigitigong membership will get the best opportunity possible and that it benefits all membership. It is also important that membership has a clear understanding in these important issues and how crucial it is in keeping these issues within our membership to the upmost confidence.

Economic Development

First Nations are always trying to strive towards self sufficiency, Biigitigong is going in the right direction with bumps in the road, business cannot become successful without learning from mistakes. There are many opportunities out there that can make a thriving business. In regards to forestry we have to ask the question of why other forestry operations can operate, provide pulp and lumber and why we cannot. When working within our traditional territory there has to be a guaranteed wood allocation to provide for these mills. There also has to be reputable, trusted and competent foresters that can secure proper wood allocation and know the feasibility to ensure these areas are sustainable and profitable. It seems again First Nations are getting the short end of the stick when competing with the other forestry companies that provide pulp and lumber. These other forestry companies may also be at an advantage with having more experienced people in their organization and being well on board with the government for FRL and SFLs. (Licenses to obtain wood)

There can be so many other opportunities with another possible hydro dam development, east to west transmission line construction, mining contracts in other mines, aggregates and road maintenance, tourism, commercial fishing, wind power, these are just to name a few. I see there has been some opportunity with individuals for electrical maintenance and power line apprenticeships. I hope that the trend of opportunity continues, especially for the younger generation.

Constitution

Our Gchi Naaknigewin is a very complex and important project that must consist of community involvement and input to ensure proper development and direction. I would like to get more educated in this very important process that will affect and most importantly benefit future generations for as long as we are keepers of the land and protectors of the water.

Housing

Proper housing is one of the more important of many issues. Families need a safe dwelling free of potential dampness which in turn causing house to shift and mold. Properly built homes should also require minimal maintenance other than annual furnace and HRV every 3 months. Choosing a good reputable contractor in building, wiring, heating and installing plumbing in a home is very important. In the next phase of housing, obtaining a decent contractor price is also important. Potential tenants should also have a decision in financing with shorter terms and competitive mortgage rates. Why pay \$300 a month for 15-20 years on renovations? Banks easily offer millions to First Nations to build and renovate homes, tenants get stuck paying more interest over longer terms. A housing authority can make housing affordable, housing authorities also operate on non-profit other than the salaries that operate the housing authority. There are social impact bonds that potential housing authorities can access making housing and maintenance much more affordable.

Bylaws in regards to dogs and speeding

The Gchi-Naaknigewin will eventually give us the ability to develop our own laws from membership support. I believe there is a bylaw in the books and people have in fact been charged and fined for loose dogs in the past. However the federal prosecutor doesn't want to prosecute dog bylaw infractions, it's a waste of resources. Can Biigitigong utilize the legal resources that they already have to prosecute their own laws? My answer is I believe they can.

Land Claim

Land claim settlements have been a very long process for many First Nations across the country. Some settlements become public knowledge via the news, social media etc. Many of these settlements can be substantial or just part of an overall settlement. It is very important that any potential settlement go to infrastructure and future generations. However we must also remember our present and past generations and how we did not benefit fully from resources extracted within our traditional territory, it's still happening today. In the event of a full or partial settlement, I would fully support and advocate that all of our present membership benefit. There has been some concern of a dangerous precedence if there were a settlement, lifestyles should not determine on how it benefits our membership. We cannot predict the lifestyles of our future generations, but I do fully believe we as First peoples are making our journey on the right path, the path is rough. We will always persevere, that's why we are here today.

In closing, as Chief Michano said "think about who you are going to vote for," can they make a difference? It is your duty to vote, it is up to you to determine the outcome of Biigitigong and the future generations. Good luck to all candidates on September 30, 2017.

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John Twance

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