

Good morning Ladies and Gentleman!

Who am I?

My name is Ambrose Achneepineskum I am Chief of the Marten Falls First Nation. Im an elected official and its position I have held for a period of four years . I am a member of Marten Falls First Nation and the Indigenous Nishnawbe Aski Nation. I am also a father of two grown daughters Miriam and Talitha.

I am here today with my friend Larissa Stevens who is a Geoscientist specializing in water science and also KWG Resources who invited me to this conference today.

Who is Marten Falls First Nation and where are we located you may ask?

My community is not a big community as we have a membership of approximately 800 members. Marten Falls First Nation is part of the larger Nishnawbe Aski Nation- an Ojibwa/ Cree Indigenous Nation which comprises of 45,000 First Nation or Indigenous persons.

The Nishnawbe Aski are an Indigenous group under the United Nations definition. As Indigenous Peoples, we have survived the impacts of colonization and an era of rapid development including the mass resettlement of immigrating peoples and an integration of differing societies on lands where North American Indigenous Nations first inhabited.

Today, the Marten Falls First Nation and Nishnawbe Aski Nations continue to live under the continuing legislation and policies of the governments of Canada and Ontario. The legislation of the Indian Act was enacted in 1876 virtually set up policies that still today governs every aspect of an Indigenous person's life from birth to death. It has kept Indigenous Nations in Canada marginalized and living in poverty on the fringes of Canadian society.

It has been the position by many of our Indigenous leaders that the Indian Act of the Canadian legislation should be done away with and a new relationship with Canada begin; a new relationship should be based on how the treaties were interpreted by our elders, which was a treaty to share the land and resources. A new relationship based on respect and the promise of working together to address long standing issues, we can progress where our First Nations people would advance politically, economically, and socially. A new relationship would have the ability to strengthen our cultures and seek to strengthen the mutual ties that bind our peoples and that is the land and environment.

Where is the land?

Marten Falls are located in far northern Ontario in the western James Bay lowlands of Ontario, Canada.

The territory of the First Nations is lush with forested riverways and muskeg peatlands full of water and moss. The area is said by our elders to be "the lungs of mother earth" ; this teaching from the elders confirms what western science says of the muskeg peatlands and forest regions in the James Bay lowlands as one of the largest carbon dioxide sinks in North America. The rivers are also relatively free of pollution; fish, waterfowl, and moose continue to be harvested by Indigenous people without fear of ingesting cumulative poisons from any industrial development.

The area has been officially given with a new name by the mining industry and governments of Ontario and Canada as the **Ring of Fire** region due to rich deposits laid out over an geographic area in a large semi ring shape. The Ring of Fire is without doubt, an area rich in vast mineral deposits including nickel, copper, and chromite ores. It is said the Ring of Fire chromite deposit is the largest in North America.

Why is the Ring of Fire important you may ask?

The Ring of Fire is important to the Ontario and Canadian governments as it holds a promise of much needed development and a boost for the regional economy. Canadian mining speculators and politicians and have equated the area as one of the largest potential areas to consider for mining development on a scale comparable to the Athabasca Tarsands; the area holds the potential of 100 years of mining activity should the infrastructure that is needed be built.

For Marten Falls First Nation and Nishnawbe Aski Nation, the Ring of Fire mining opportunity promises an opportunity for renewal of a people who have been historically disadvantaged by legislation and policies that viewed Canada's Indigenous peoples as problems to be solved; rather than peoples who have the innate ability to take control of their own lives should they be afforded with opportunity. This opportunity would come from the governments recent promises to bring about reconciliation with Canada's Indigenous peoples; the mantra of Canada's reconciliation efforts with Indigenous Nations has been to continue to communicate that the wrongs of the past by not repeated. For true reconciliation to happen; a new relationship needs to begin in true spirit with Indigenous peoples like Nishnawbe Aski Nation and actions need to be followed with words.

You may ask how can a Indigenous Nations offer the business world of mining a new path forward to work and bring about changes that would benefit the world?

Mahatma Gandhi once said "Be the change you want to see in the world!" I often think about this in my own personal life and ask how can a person's attitude in life make changes that would have the ability to affect great changes for the better. Gandhi faced possible detention, imprisonment, and even death to bring about changes for the better for his nation. He envisioned a country where his people would lead in their own land and control their own lives. A few short years later, his dream became a reality with India regaining independence.

The Marten Falls First Nation and Nishnawbe Aski Nation continue to seek political and socioeconomic solutions on how we can bring about change in a world that seems to offer no readily solutions and at times avails no opportunity for a nation to strengthen itself.

The dream our leaders aspire to is- as peoples would rise up to become a Nation within a Nation and would contribute as a real partner. A peoples whose youth now live without hope would be afforded with a future. A people whose socio-economic statistics are often abysmal and if measured and now lie at the lower end of the social progress index would progress for the better. A peoples whose youth face higher prospects of incarceration, high mortality rates with young, suicide, low education rates as indicators of a nation to nation relationship in need of reconciliation. It would begin a new era where policy and decision making includes Indigenous Nations from the start with legislation and a recognition of our inherent right to govern our own Nations.

In conclusion, It can be asked? How does the business global community make the necessary changes to improve life for groups like Nishnawbe Aski and Marten Falls?

We need leadership at all levels including the business world to take into account what Indigenous Peoples have to offer:

Our elders have always maintained teachings or principles are needed, in order Mother Earth sustain herself in a manner that is based on true sustainability and a respect for all the environment and ecosystems.

In conclusion, I will outline a few of their teachings from our elders:

Do not pollute the land- our future generations including yours depend on the lands and waters that are all interconnected.

-Take only what you need to survive- build into your systems true sustainability and avoid wasteful harvesting.

-Respect the circle of life- meaning preserve the abundance of diversity. Today, many species go extinct when development stresses the ecosystems.

-Ensure good governance is there to protect the land- government processes today with large projects including Environmental Assessments must be built upon solid principles and inclusive of the people that affect them if not lead by them.

-Respect your neighbours – one day you will come to rely on them for your immediate needs and the relations you build will aid in your own development

These are but a few of the teachings our elders pass on and there are many.

I want to thank you for your reception and for your attention with my words today. I hope you will have a good conference and I will turn it over to my friends at KWG Resources.

Our word for thank you is Megwetch ,so megwetch and have a good day!

The world today needs leaders who are better inclined to look at the world and say yes I would like to do my part ever chance and opportunity I get to make this a better world. To quote Louis Armstrong the Great Satchmo who often visited Paris due to . It's a wonderful world Lets make it that a wonderful world