

A FRIENDSHIP ACCORD

March 27, 2020



An Historic Accord

On November 2, 2019, on Treaty 20 land and the traditional territory of the Michi Sagiig Anishinaabeg, an historic Friendship Accord was signed between Indigenous communities and municipalities in Peterborough County. The purpose was to allow each partner to “enhance and honour one another’s historical, political, economic, social and cultural relationships.” Dignitaries, community members,

and young people were invited to witness the signing as representatives of Hiawatha First Nation, Curve Lake First Nation, Selwyn Township, Otonabee South-Monaghan, the County of Peterborough, and Peterborough and the Kawarthas Economic Development formalized their commitment to work together for the wellbeing of all their communities. The historic ceremony was followed by a celebratory reception and feast.

The name of the accord is Ezhi-Wijikiwendiyang. In Ojibwe, this translates to “how we are friends.”



Good friends

The idea for the Accord began in 2016 when the participants were selected for a national program called the Community Economic Development Initiative (CEDI), which was coordinated through the Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM) and the Council for the

Advancement of Native Development Officers (Cando). CEDI helps neighbouring municipalities and First Nations develop partnerships that establish mutually beneficial economic development to build more sustainable economies.

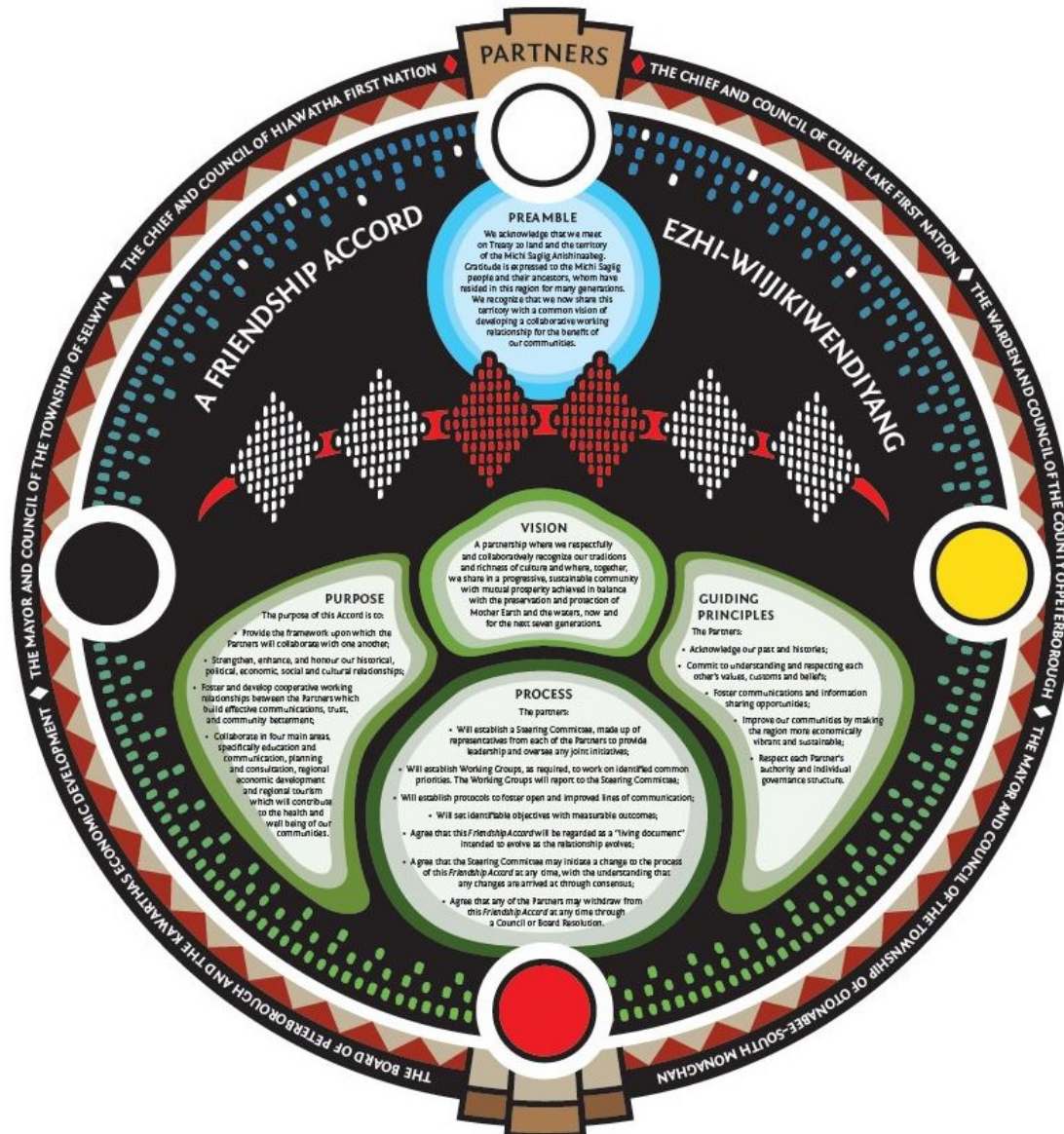
After being selected for the CEDI, each of the partners formalized their commitment by passing Council and Band resolutions committing for three years, from 2017 to 2020. “This partnership definitely demonstrates how to be good friends,” said Tanya Tourangeau, the CEDI program coordinator. “They wanted to set an example for everybody else.”

A Vision

The vision, as articulated in the Friendship Accord, is to build “a partnership where we respectfully and collaboratively recognize our traditions and richness of culture and where, together, we share in a progressive, sustainable community with mutual prosperity achieved in balance with the preservation and protection of Mother Earth and the waters, now and for the next seven generations.”

The signatories believe that the Accord will demonstrate how six partners can work together to strengthen their communities. “I’m hoping it leads to a greater cultural understanding on all sides,” remarked Hiawatha First Nation’s Chief, Laurie Carr. “This accord will enable us to work together in the spirit of unity, co-operation, and build a partnership to help each other.” Her Accord partner, Emily Whetung, Chief of Curve Lake First Nation, agreed: “I think it’s a recognition of our inherent rights and our desire to work together.” Chief Whetung was joined at the ceremony by the notable

former chief of Curve Lake, Keith Knott, who believes it is vital for all partners to focus on the future: “We must start looking forward —seeing where the horizon is and seeing what is beyond the horizon.”



Reflections

Inclusive economic prosperity is often a goal to be achieved, a strategy set in place where the best-case scenarios mean that no one is left behind. What is so powerful about the Friendship Accord is that inclusive economic prosperity is not a future ideal but an active

practice—one that is done in the spirit of friendship, rather than as a winner-take-all approach.

Changes to how we relate to our fellow human beings are happening faster than we can describe them. As computers and algorithms promise ever more connectedness, the nature and the value of the connections are often unclear.

And yet friendship is more than simple connections. True friendship is about forging meaningful ties. Ties that are intended to withstand the uncertainty brought by the existential change of our age. The Friendship Accord is an unabashed expression of hope and faith. It is an ambitious collaboration that makes good on the potential of local institutions, which are closest to the people. It is an example for all of us, on how to connect the dots between economic, environmental, and social issues. Above all, it recognizes the role of people in cultivating common ground, while respecting different cultural traditions for a more sustainable future.

It was a genuine privilege to witness the signing of the Accord and to see for myself the friendship that has been built over the years.

[Sustainability](#)