

Ojibway Nation of Saugeen  
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**Open Letter to the Members of Ojibway Nation of Saugeen**

**From Customary Chief Edward Machimity**

My thoughts are on our upcoming Traditional Gathering, scheduled for June 20 and 21, 2019, during which our community will come together to celebrate what we have accomplished and plan for our future together.

The stability of our community's leadership has been an important part of all we have accomplished. I have been honoured to have been chosen by the elders before me to lead our community as Customary Chief for over 34 years. It has been my privilege to represent and protect the Treaty rights of our people to Canada, which I hope will benefit generations to come. It has been my honour to fight for the recognition of our people as a separate sovereign Nation and see our people get a land base of our own.

It is now time to consider the next step in my journey and plan for a smooth and respectful transition for my successor. I anticipate that all community members will be given a fair and open opportunity at a Traditional Gathering to speak their mind on my succession plan.

In case I am not well enough to participate in that discussion, I am putting my succession plan to you in writing so that we can discuss the matter now. It is the responsibility of the Customary Chief to appoint his or her successor, and I want to make sure I fulfill my obligation, which will take effect on my passing.

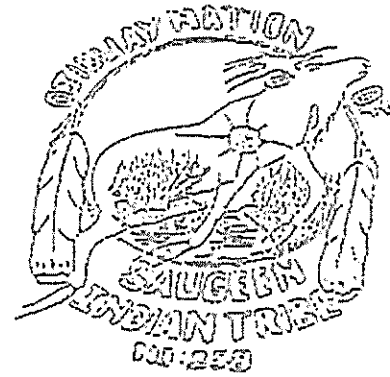
The person who I believe is in the best position to take on the leadership of Ojibway Nation of Saugeen, as Customary Chief, is Violet Machimity. Violet has worked at my side as a true partner over the past 34 years, and has clear insight into the day to day operations of our community, and the respect of all those she deals with, most importantly our community members. Violet is fluent in our language, Ojibway, and understands our Convention. Additionally, it is my hope that when Darrell B. Keesic retires from the police force, that he would be in a position to take on a long-term leadership role with Ojibway Nation of Saugeen. I have discussed this plan with both Violet and Darrell and they have both expressed a willingness to take on leadership responsibilities when called to do so. I feel confident that my succession plan would put the future generations of Ojibway Nation of Saugeen members into the strong hands of thoughtful well respected leaders who have already proven themselves over the years.

  
**Customary Chief Edward Machimity**

May 16, 2019

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## History of the Ojibway Nation of Saugeen Governing System

I, **EDWARD MACHIMITY**, Customary Chief of Ojibway Nation of Saugeen, have prepared this document to commit to writing the history of our governing system and the appointment process for the positions of Customary Chief and Headmen, for the benefit of all present and future members of Ojibway Nation of Saugeen and the peaceful and respectful transition of all future leaders.

I have been the recognized Customary Chief of Ojibway Nation of Saugeen since before our government was recognized by the Government of Canada in 1985, and the history and events I have set out below are accurate and have been independently verified by others who witnessed these events.

### Recognition of Ojibway Nation of Saugeen and its First Customary Chief and Headmen

The people of Ojibway Nation of Saugeen are members of the Nishnawbe-aski Nation. Prior to recognition by the Government of Canada in 1985, many Bands of Nishnawbe-aski Nation people were lumped together by the Governments of Ontario and Canada for administrative convenience. At that time, the people of Ojibway Nation of Saugeen were considered to form part of Lac Seul First Nation.

By the 1970s, negotiations began taking place with the federal government for independent recognition of a number of Bands whose traditional territory was located in Northern and Northwestern Ontario.

Ojibway Nation of Saugeen was one of six distinct Bands of Nishnawbe-aski Nation people living outside Lac Seul Reserve who wished to be recognized as independent First Nations and which became known as the "Six Pack".

Most of the families of Ojibway Nation of Saugeen were living in and around the community of Savant Lake, Ontario, located about 125 kilometers northwest of Ignace, Ontario. The elders appointed three spokespersons to represent the people in negotiations with the Government of Canada.

Gilbert Machimity and David Necan became spokespersons and I was appointed Chief spokesperson representing the Ojibway Nation of Saugeen people. It was recognized by all that I would become Chief and Gilbert Machimity and David Necan would become Headmen when we were finally recognized as an independent First Nation.

From an early age, a number of the elders spent time with me, to mold me for leadership. The elders recognized that I was hard working, had a stable family environment and the ability to provide for and take care of, not only my family, but the community as a whole.

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Prior to the official recognition of Ojibway Nation of Saugeen by Canada, the elders organized a Traditional Gathering at which I was appointed Customary Chief and Gilbert Machimity and David Necan were appointed Headmen. While the customs of Ojibway Nation of Saugeen were not set out in writing at the time, it was clear that our appointments were to be for life, and this was later confirmed when the Ojibway Nation of Saugeen Custom and Usage Convention (Convention) was written down.

The Government of Canada recognized Ojibway Nation of Saugeen as an independent First Nation on April 15, 1985, and at that time I was recognized and confirmed by Canada as Customary Chief and Gilbert Machimity and David Necan were recognized and confirmed as Headmen.

### **Adoption of the Ojibway Nation of Saugeen Custom and Usage Convention**

In order to put into writing our governing system, on December 9, 1997, the Convention was adopted at a Traditional Gathering called by me as Customary Chief and the Headmen.

The Convention makes clear that the Customary Chief and Headmen will be "life time" positions and that these positions will be administered "according to customary practice and heredity law." The Convention allows for one Customary Chief and not more than four Headmen.

The Convention provides that adult Citizens of Ojibway Nation of Saugeen are "eligible to voice a right of principle opinion" with respect to the appointment of a Customary Chief and the Headmen. The Convention does not provide for the removal of the Customary Chief or Headmen. However, the Convention does provide for a review every 21 years.

On January 30, 2019, I, as Customary Chief and the Headmen, called for a Traditional Gathering to take place on June 20 and 21, 2019, for the purpose of such review.

The customary practice and hereditary law of Ojibway Nation of Saugeen is that the Customary Chief, in consultation with the members, chooses the successors to the position of Customary Chief and Headmen, which are presented to a Traditional Gathering of members, at which time, any adult member is eligible to voice a right of principle opinion concerning the appointment.

The Convention further provides that "approval and final decision making will rest with the Customary Chief and Headmen."

This is the process that was followed to replace Headman Gilbert Machimity, who passed away in April, 2000, and David Necan, who passed away in July 2004. In August, 2006, I called for a Traditional Gathering in order to appoint new Headmen.

At the Traditional Gathering, in August 2006, which took place in the Health Centre on the Ojibway Nation of Saugeen Reserve, I announced my choices of Eileen Keesic, John Sapay and Gladys Oombash as Headmen. My choices were based upon considerations of family stability, working for the community and being able to assess issues and communicate respectfully with the members.


Each of them spoke to the people in attendance and all of the people were asked to voice their opinions. No one stated any disagreement and, therefore, Eileen Keesic, John Sapay and Gladys Oombash became Headmen.

From that time onward, the four of us have all lived on the Ojibway Nation of Saugeen Reserve and carried out our duties as Customary Chief and Headmen. Recently, in January 2019,



Gladys Oombash resigned as a Headman.

It is expected that all future Customary Chiefs and Headman will be appointed in this same way, in accordance with our customary practice and the written Convention.

  
**Customary Chief Edward Machiminy**

May 16, 2019