

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

October 29, 2009:

**WALPOLE ISLAND FIRST NATION PASSES PROTOCOL ON CONSULTATION
AND ACCOMMODATION IN ITS TRADITIONAL TERRITORY:**

GOVERNMENTS AND COMPANIES SHOULD TAKE NOTICE

Walpole Island First Nation – a First Nation highly regarded for its leadership in environmental stewardship – has passed its own Consultation and Accommodation Protocol to improve the chances that cultural, social and environmental respect, and certainty, will be built into all decisions made and actions taken by all governments and proponents, in its traditional territory.

That territory encompasses Sarnia and other areas in what is known as Chemical Valley in Ontario – one of the most industrialized and toxic-risk zones in all of Canada. The WIFN residential community (its reserve) sits downstream and downwind from significant levels of pollutants, yet maintains species and ecosystems in this small portion of its territory, that cannot readily be found elsewhere.

After decades of trying to deal individually with each governmental and proponent notice and issue on developments in Walpole Island First Nation’s traditional territory, the WIFN leadership decided that this was a more effective and efficient way of proceeding.

“This Protocol lays out what our First Nation expects from all companies who intend to do business, and all government departments and agencies who intend to make decisions about any developments or activities, in our homeland,” says Chief Joseph Gilbert. “We feel that this Protocol will help industry and government do the right thing and have certainty about what that right thing is – in terms of respecting our rights and our lands. We expect this Protocol will greatly assist positive relationship building, but it needs to be mutually beneficial relationship building, and not one-sided.”

The Protocol lays out principles and practical steps for anyone wishing to pursue or approve a development in WIFN homeland that might affect WIFN rights and interests. This Protocol can be found at www.bkejwanong.com

WIFN has a claim before the Ontario Superior Court of Justice for aboriginal title to a large portion of the lakebeds of Lakes Huron, Erie, and St. Clair, and portions of the Detroit and St. Clair Rivers. This claim has survived significant challenges by the Crown and will proceed to trial. WIFN also has aboriginal rights elsewhere in its traditional territory.

These acknowledged and asserted rights form one basis for the Protocol. The other basis is the First Nation’s own law – Anishinaabe Law.

“We are setting a precedent,” says WIFN Consultation Manager, Dr. Dean Jacobs. “We are fitting our law, customs, and perspectives with those of our non-aboriginal neighbours in Canada. This is about true neighbourly relations.”

“We expect people to honour this Protocol,” says the Chief. “Because we believe it is the honourable thing to do.”

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Please see the Consultation and Accommodation Protocol at www.bkejwanong.com