



# NEWS RELEASE

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## ***For Immediate Release***

### **NCN to Conduct Intensive Consultation Program with Members on Wuskwatim PDA: Ratification Vote June 7 and 14, 2006**

**WINNIPEG** – *March 30, 2006* – Nisichawayasihk Cree Nation will conduct an extensive public consultation process on the Wuskwatim Project Development Agreement (PDA) with its Members in the weeks leading up to the ratification vote on the agreement on June 14 (advance poll June 7), NCN Councillor and Future Development portfolio holder, W. Elvis Thomas, announced today.

“We made a commitment to our Members at the beginning of the negotiation process with Manitoba Hydro to provide comprehensive consultations at various stages of the process to ensure Members are up to speed on the project,” Thomas said. “We’ve fulfilled that commitment at every step of the process. As the final negotiations are now complete, we want to make sure our Members have as many opportunities as possible to find out about the PDA, so they can make an informed decision in the ratification vote.”

Consultations will take place in six communities where a significant number of NCN Members live, including NCN’s home community of Nelson House, as well as Thompson, South Indian Lake, Leaf Rapids, Winnipeg and Brandon.

Members in each community will have opportunities to learn about the project at meetings and open houses. In Nelson House, Members will have additional opportunities at special events like Wuskwatim Week and small group meetings on specific topics related to the project.

Supporting the consultation process will be a range of information materials that explain and interpret the PDA for Members.

“The PDA is a 1,500-plus page legal document. Few people will take the time to read it in full or to understand its legal language, although it will be available to Members who want to see it. So, we’ve prepared explanatory information and presentation materials about the PDA that will be available to Members,” Thomas said.

Print materials include: an overview of the PDA; a summary of the risks, benefits and safeguards; an extensive question and answer document that answers questions raised by NCN Members; a summary of the major contracts related to the PDA; and a summary of the separate agreements in the PDA. Some materials have been translated and recorded in Cree for Members who do not read or understand English.

The information materials will be distributed to Members’ homes in the six communities and be available at all public consultation meetings. As well, it will be posted on the [www.ncncree.com](http://www.ncncree.com) website. NCN’s negotiating team and professional advisors will attend the consultation meetings to explain the agreement and answer questions.

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“We’re confident we’re providing a comprehensive consultation program that should give Members ample opportunity to obtain the information they need before they vote,” Thomas said.

The ratification vote will take place on two dates: at an advance poll on Wednesday, June 7, and the main vote one week later on Wednesday, June 14. Polls will be open from 9:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. in Nelson House, Thompson, South Indian Lake, Leaf Rapids Winnipeg and Brandon. All registered NCN Members 18 years and older are eligible to vote.

The PDA defines minimum notification requirements through newspaper and radio advertisements to ensure Members are aware of the consultation process and vote.

The ratification vote requires a double majority to pass. A majority of eligible NCN Members must vote and a majority of those voting must vote to approve the PDA. A no vote would mean Manitoba Hydro would not proceed with the project.

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*Nisichawayasihk Cree Nation is based in Nelson House, Manitoba, about 800 kilometres north of Winnipeg and 80 kilometres west of Thompson. NCN has close to 4,000 members living in Nelson House, South Indian Lake, Thompson, Brandon and Winnipeg.*

**For more information please contact Councillor William Elvis Thomas at (204) 679-0803 or through the NCN Council office at (204) 484-2332.**

Electronic versions of this news release and other background information are available for download at [www.ncncree.com/mediadesk.html](http://www.ncncree.com/mediadesk.html).