



## **Over 300 Members Attend General Band Meeting on Wuskwatim - Interest Expected to Remain High**

**NELSON HOUSE, Manitoba – June 23, 2004** – Over 300 NCN Members registered and attended the General Band meeting in Nelson House yesterday, to discuss the Wuskwatim project.

The meeting was held to bring Members up-to-date on the project development and negotiations between Manitoba Hydro and NCN.

“We were very pleased with the turnout,” said Chief Jerry Primrose. “Members had an opportunity to ask questions and make comments about the project.”

NCN's Council, Future Development Team, Environmental Management Team, Community Consultants, legal, technical and scientific advisors, and Manitoba Hydro also attended.

The meeting at the Gilbert McDonald Arena opened with a pipe ceremony and closed with a community dinner. Chief Primrose set the tone for the day with his opening address: “Let’s open our hearts and our minds today, so we can plan for our future, with confidence that we have the facts, and we are free from outside interference in our decisions.”

Councillor and Future Development Portfolio Holder W. Elvis Thomas presented an overview of the project and the Summary of Understandings, to help Members understand what is currently being negotiated. “For the past five years our Future Development Team has used all the resources at its disposal to negotiate, what your Chief and Council believe will be an historic agreement that will benefit our people and reflect the expressed values and expectations of our community and our Members.”

Manitoba Hydro Power Planning and Operation Division Manager Ed Wojczynski told NCN Members that Hydro acknowledges the Churchill River Diversion had a major adverse impact on NCN’s environment and its people and that the impacts had been greater than expected. “We regret the harm that these impacts caused to your Nation, elders, resource harvesters and community,” he said.

He praised the First Nation for its progressive attitude and said Hydro appreciated the opportunity to work with NCN as a partner, seeking the potential development of Wuskwatim.

South Indian Lake Headman Chris Baker told NCN Members that their leaders were working in the best interest of the community and encouraged members to support the Chief and Council through the process.

Council is now preparing for the next stage of consultation with Members, concerning Section 35 of the Constitution, which protects treaties and Aboriginal rights. As part of the consultation, representatives from provincial and federal government departments will meet with the community this summer, before the governments consider issuing licences and permits for the Wuskwatim Generation Project.

Negotiations are also continuing between NCN and Manitoba Hydro over the Wuskwatim Project Development Agreement (PDA), which NCN Members will have an opportunity to vote on later this year.

“Council will be very active in our community, now that the Clean Environment Commission Hearing on Wuskwatim has concluded,” Chief Primrose said.

“We expect the interest from the community will continue as we approach this important decision and we are going to do our best to ensure our Members take part in the process and are informed and knowledgeable about the agreement and the project.”