

Thessalon First Nation Boundary Claim Negotiations

Fact Sheet #1

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Thessalon First Nation

Thessalon First Nation is located on the north shore of Lake Huron, 100 kilometers east of Sault Ste. Marie.

Thessalon First Nation and the Government of Ontario are working together to resolve a boundary claim through negotiation. The goal of this process is to conclude a fair and final settlement that will foster reconciliation and resolve the outstanding claim regarding the land promised to Thessalon First Nation under the Robinson Huron Treaty.

What is the Thessalon Boundary Claim?

In 1850, as a result of expanding mining around Lake Huron and Lake Superior, the Crown entered into treaties with the local Ojibwe First Nations. In the Robinson Huron Treaty, First Nations surrendered the majority of the watershed of Lake Huron and Georgian Bay to the Crown. In exchange, the Treaty set aside specific reservations for the exclusive use of each adhering First Nation.

Thessalon First Nation claims that it received a substantially smaller reservation than it was promised under the Robinson Huron Treaty. It claims this was due to an error in translation between Anishinaabemowin and English by the Crown treaty commissioners when describing units of measure. Specifically, while the written version of the Robinson Huron Treaty indicates that Thessalon First Nation ought to have received a reserve *four miles square*, it claims to have understood that it would be retaining an area of *four leagues square*. Thessalon First Nation believes the French league is about three miles. Therefore, while the written version of the Treaty described the Thessalon First Nation reservation as 16 square miles, Thessalon First Nation claims it understood the Treaty promise to mean it would retain 144 square miles.

The Negotiations

Thessalon First Nation and Ontario agree that the best way to resolve this claim is to work together to find effective, fair solutions.

In June, 2017, Thessalon and Ontario signed a Negotiation Framework Agreement, setting out the rules and goals of the negotiations.



Preliminary negotiations are going well, but much work remains to be done.

Much of the land within and around the claim area has been sold by the Crown, over many decades. Both Thessalon First Nation and Ontario recognize the rights of private property holders.

Consultation will take place alongside the negotiations. The rights and interests of members of the public who are concerned about, or could be affected by a settlement will be taken into account by Ontario and Thessalon First Nation. There will be public consultation meetings, meetings with local municipal leadership, and consultation with other Indigenous communities.

Land

There will be a land component to the settlement. The settlement may also provide money in lieu of lands that can no longer be returned to the Thessalon First Nation.

Private property will not be expropriated. Current access to private land will also be maintained. Any acquisition of private property relating to the land component of the settlement will be on a willing-seller / willing-buyer basis.

The Benefits of Negotiated Settlements

The timely resolution of this claim through negotiation is in everyone's best interest. When compared to litigation, a negotiation process offers much more room for flexibility, imagination, respect and reconciliation. Negotiations also allow other affected people to make their concerns known. Negotiations can lead to "win-win" situations that balance the rights and interests of all concerned.

Settlements can bring benefits and certainty to Indigenous communities and their neighbours, and can bring new business opportunities to local economies.

For more information, please contact:

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