

## Sault Tribe Members vote to repeal settlements

Contributed by Michelle Bouschor  
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### Unofficial results announced

SAULT STE. MARIE, Mich. — The Sault Tribe Election Committee has announced unofficial results for two referenda sent to eligible Sault Tribe members earlier this month. All completed ballots returned to the Tribe by March 25 were counted last night in a public meeting held at the Big Bear Arena.

Resolution 2011-09, which approved the final settlement of a six-year legal battle, which the tribe lost in Circuit Court. The voters decided, by a vote of 1,842 to approve to 2,568 to not approve Resolution 2011-09.

The other referendum sought to repeal Resolution 2010-292, which approved a settlement payout of \$18,000 to former Sault Tribe Police Chief Fred Paquin, who is now serving time in federal prison after admitting he misused federal funds awarded to the tribal Police Department between 2002 and 2008. The voters decided, by a vote of 2,163 to approve to 2,233 to not approve of Resolution 2010-249.

Anyone seeking to contest the results of the vote counts must submit his or her challenge to the Election Committee by 5 p.m. on March 28, 2011. Results will be certified and deemed official at the next Board of Directors meeting or within seven days of all challenges being resolved.

For this election, 14,417 ballots were sent to tribal members with 4,509 of voters — 31.3 percent of registered voters — returning their referenda ballots.

The referenda, which will cost the tribe about \$40,000 to complete, sought to reverse actions by the Sault Tribe Board of Directors that resulted from two separate Circuit Court cases involving the tribe. The outcomes of these court cases cannot — under federal, state or tribal laws — be undone by a vote of tribal members because the tribe has, signed binding settlement agreements which will save hundreds of thousands of dollars in additional legal bills and other costs. Despite the election results, no formal action can be taken.

Tribal Chairman Joe McCoy said tribal leaders are going to examine reforms that will protect the members' right to referendum while ensuring the tribe is able to do business in an efficient manner.

"We must always, as tribal members, have the right and ability to use the referendum to challenge decisions that can be changed," he said. "But people who have their own political agendas should not be able to waste scarce tribal resources on referenda that are irrelevant and waste tribal funds. This money could be used for many other tribal services that could directly impact our members. Using the referendum process like this is simply wasteful and an abuse of our rights."

The tribe's seven-county service area is divided into five election units encompassing Mackinac, Chippewa, Luce, Delta, Alger, Schoolcraft, and Marquette counties. The right of referendum is provided for in the tribe's Constitution and is implemented by Chapter 12 of the Tribal Code. According to the code, an ordinance or resolution enacted by the board of directors can be submitted to a popular referendum by a petition signed by 100 eligible voters of the tribe.

According to the Tribal Code, at least 30 percent of the eligible voters must cast a ballot to make the results binding. If less than 30 percent of ballots are cast, the election is null and void.

The resolutions and Tribal Code are available online at [www.saulttribe.com](http://www.saulttribe.com).