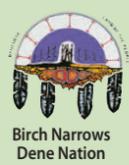


Meadow Lake First Nation News

Birch Narrows
Dene NationBuffalo River
Dene NationCanoe Narrows
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First NationFlying Dust
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Richard Ben elected new Tribal Chief

Richard Ben is ready to reunite the nine bands that make up the Meadow Lake Tribal Council (MLTC).

This was the message Ben continued to share with supporters after being elected as the new MLTC tribal chief following a vote held in Saskatoon Wednesday afternoon (Nov. 21). Ben, who for several years served as chief of Makwa Sahgaiehcan First Nation, earned 34 votes to the 15 garnered by fellow candidate Robert Sylvester of Birch Narrows Dene Nation.

"I'm very emotional right now," Ben said during his victory speech. "A big thanks to all of you who came here... I won't let you down. I explained to you what it is I want to do. I want to bring us all together, all our communities, to be that powerhouse we used to be when people would talk about us, not just in Saskatchewan but throughout Canada."

Ben, a father of two, firmly believes in culture, tradition and community and, during his time as MSFN chief, has worked hard to build a strong community where families can grow and prosper, as well as a community where members can feel safe and have opportunities to better themselves and their families. He also believes, by working together, the nine MLTC bands can achieve much of the same.

"We all have to come together to move forward, and we will," he said. "I promise you that. With all our chiefs who are here, all our councillors, all our community members we will go far."

Ben went on to thank Canoe Lake Cree First Nation chief Francis Iron for nominating him, as well as Buffalo River Dene Nation chief Eileen Morrison for seconding the nomination.

"I also want to thank them for believing in me – I want to thank everyone here for believing in me," he stated. "Let's all move forward together. I didn't think I would ever be where I am right now and it brings me to tears to know you guys believe in me."



Newly-elected MLTC Tribal Chief Richard Ben speaks to supporters following the Nov. 21 vote.

Ben served six terms on MSFN council, first as a councillor – a role he was originally elected to at age 23 – before running for chief at the age of 25. He's now 36 years old.

"Wow, I never thought I would be here," he added in an interview conducted following his visit to the podium. "I decided to run for tribal chief earlier this year. I was talking to some of the chiefs, and they approached me and asked if I would consider it."

Ben admitted he was hesitant at first because he was concerned what his departure from MSFN council would mean for his community.

"But, I have full faith in the council I have there," he said. "They care about our people and they work great together, so that's what made me decide to move forward and help all our nations."

Ben also gives credit to his good friend Lance Byhette, former Buffalo River Dene Nation chief, for encouraging him to pursue the tribal chief position.

"We've always had a good relationship, always seen the same vision," Ben said. "He asked me to consider running and I told him, if his chief (Morrison) and council would support me, I would consider it. I gave Eileen an offering of a blanket and

tobacco, asked if she would support me and she said yes."

Unlike a regular band election, Ben said campaigning for tribal chief was much more difficult because of the number of communities involved and the simple fact he can't be everywhere at one time to encourage people to get out and vote.

"It was still a great experience, however," he said.

He also looks forward to settling into his new role as soon as possible.

"I still need to take care of things back home and then I'll start making the transition to the tribal council – hopefully I will be there by next week," Ben noted. "I feel good about the leadership back home and am sure they will represent our people to the best of their ability. There are 13,000 members in our nine communities, so I have some big shoes to fill. My main focus now is to bring all our communities together, bring that unity back. It's been a time where our communities feel displacement from their tribal council, and I want to bring them back... It's been like this for a long time. I've been at the table for 10 years and even our members feel disengagement. I want them to feel the MLTC is theirs and I want them to feel comfortable going there and

having the MLTC serve them. That's what they are there for. If there were no nine nations, there would be no tribal council. We need to pull up our socks and fulfil the needs of our nine nations. Saying that, I will take direction from our chiefs and councillors. Whatever they want me to do, I am at their service."

The position of tribal chief is a four-year term, which Ben believes is sufficient time to achieve the goals he has set.

"One of those goals is to get a dialysis machine for Meadow Lake," he added. "I feel for the people in the northern communities who need to travel seven hours one way and back to get treatment. Before my brother passed away, he had to travel to Saskatoon three times per week for dialysis treatment. He spent the last part of his life travelling back-and-forth, and that's no way to live."

The new tribal chief also plans to work alongside the City of Meadow Lake to help the community as a whole reach new heights.

"I want to make Meadow Lake grow," he said. "Right now things seem to be at a standstill. Our people are getting bigger and stronger, and we need to start evolving. We bring a lot of quality to the table, and other areas I would like to see a stronger focus placed on are kids and sports."

This harkens back to Ben's pre-political life when he worked as a recreation coordinator for his community with aspirations of one day joining the RCMP.

"I never planned to run for council, but I was asked to and so I did," he said.

Although his parents, Jenny Ben and Peter Merz, had no political background, Ben's aunt, Helen, served as MSFN chief as well as MLTC's tribal chief in the past.

"She's been very influential on my life," he said.

Ben is engaged to Adrienne Durocher, has two daughters and two stepsons, and credits his parents as being the biggest influences on his life.



WLFN gets new cell tower

By the middle of December, Waterhen Lake First Nation members who live on-reserve will be able to stay in contact with others more as a new cell tower has just been upgraded in the community.

"It was first scheduled to be completed by Oct. 15, but after some preliminary testing the new date was Nov. 15," said band councillor Dennis Martell. "Then, we learned the tower base needed more reinforcement, so we've been assured by SaskTel that on Dec. 12 it'll be live."

WLFN chief Joanne Roy said in the past they relied on the Dorintosh tower for their cellular signal.

"But, it was touch and go with that service," she said. "It all depended on where you were on the reserve if you were able to get it."

Martell noted the new tower will cover the whole community.

"It's crucial to be able to communicate in emergency situations," he said. "When the forest fire happened near us this spring, some of our people couldn't call out."



The new cell tower on Waterhen Lake First Nation is centrally located in the community just north of the hockey arena.

Christine Derocher plays key role over-seeing programs

As the Meadow Lake Tribal Council's (MLTC) senior director of programs, Christine Derocher is certainly a Jill-of-all-trades.

"On a daily basis, I manage four programs out of MLTC – the justice program, the economic development program which involves training, employment and business development, the social assistance program for six of the nine first nations and the technical services program which provides advice and technical services to the first nations – mainly water, sewer and housing," Derocher explained. "I juggle one program to another every day. Over and above that, I have some extra duties. We just had our tribal chief election and I oversaw that process. I'm also doing some leadership training for the chiefs, the council and the active boards."

Derocher said some of these extra duties are not part of her current job description, but she doesn't mind.

"Some of these tasks – such as overseeing MLTC elections and leadership training – have followed me," she said. "They've followed me from previous roles I have held. But, that's OK because it keeps me busy."

Derocher started in her current position two years ago. Prior to that, she served as director of planning and development, a job that involved strategic direction, as well as some political management and policy development. Overall, she has been with MLTC for more than 30 years.

"I started with MLTC way back in 1986," she said. "I worked at the Beauval Indian Education Centre for a number of years until it closed in 1995. I was the career counsellor there at the high school. I did that for nine years and, from there, moved to the main office in Meadow Lake after all the residential schools closed and became the employment service officer for MLTC. I did that for about three years before moving into management and becoming the director of economic development. I did that for about eight years before taking on a senior management role where I've been ever since."

As for each of the programs she oversees, Derocher said many involved a lot of second-level services.

"In the justice program we have one justice coordinator in the communities and their primary task is to do mediations," she stated.



Senior director of programs, Christine Derocher, has been employed with MLTC since 1986.

"We'll do that here as well. We do a data collection here to see where our needs are. We also have an SGI traffic safety liaison position. That person goes out and does traffic safety, bike safety, quad safety, a lot of those services that are lacking at the community base."

Derocher is especially happy with a new position introduced by the justice program earlier this year.

"We applied for some funding and were able to establish a very new position for a reintegration support worker, she said. "That person just started in June. She meets with inmates who are about to be released and provides reintegration services. So, if an inmate is coming out and back into our communities, is in need of mental health therapy, spiritual guidance from elders or employment and training, that person will line it all up for the inmate. It's sort of a pilot project. MLTC was one of four organizations selected to receive the funding to start up such a position. Right now it will run until the end of March, but we hope to be able to keep something like this going beyond then. It's a good program."

With the economic development program, Derocher said the main focus is always on providing training and employment.

"We also have two employment services officers who provide assistance to people looking for employment," she explained. "And, we have a business development officer. The position is vacant right now, but that person helps with people who want to get into small business development or help

the First Nation get into corporate development. In terms of social assistance, our goal is to get people who are on social assistance trained so they can find employment. Our second employment services officer is devoted specifically to social assistance clients. We received some extra funds to help get social assistance clients between the ages of 18 and 64 develop the skills they need to find employment. We have six case management workers working with the nine First Nations."

Technical services, Derocher added, is a department that employees some really skilled people – electricians, plumbers and so on – who help the MLTC bands with their water and sewer, their capital projects, housing inspections and more.

"They're a very good bunch of people," she said.

She also said MLTC is always on the lookout for new people capable of taking on more of a senior role.

"We are always looking for people who can provide a good service to our communities, who are open, hardworking, dedicated people," she said. "People like myself who are in these senior roles aren't going to be here forever. We need to start looking for good people to take on these positions. We are always looking to improve our communities, help them develop and to move forward."

Derocher is originally from Flying Dust First Nation, although she spent her first year of schooling at the Lebret Indian Industrial Residential School in the Qu'Appelle Valley area.

"A busload of Flying Dust and Waterhen Lake kids were shipped way down south to Lebret," she said. "It's hard to remember because I was only six, but I do know it was quite an experience. I had three brothers who came along on the bus, but I wasn't able to see them much because of the chain-link fence."

Derocher would attend school in Meadow Lake for the next few years before returning to Lebret and to the residential school in Beauval during high school.

"I ended up leaving school and going to work," she said. "At the time, I felt that was the best thing for me, but it wasn't long before I realized I did not want to be a waitress for the rest of my life. So, I went back to school for social work and earned a management and business degree as well."

Canoe Lake takes a stand against drugs, alcohol with recent public protest

Canoe Lake Cree First Nation is looking to give bootleggers the boot.

Recently, a group of concerned parents from Canoe Lake organized a protest outside the home of a known bootlegger, a rally that attracted a lot of attention and may have – at least temporarily – made a difference.

“We were getting tired of seeing kids and young teens walking around our community drunk or high,” explained Sara Iron, one of the parents who both planned and participated in the protest. “We gathered in front of a known bootlegger’s house carrying signs. There were quite a few of us in the end – young people, elders and even chief and council showed up. We all want to do our part to save our kids.”

Canoe Lake Cree First Nation chief Francis Iron applauds the efforts taken by the public to not only raise awareness about the presence of drugs and alcohol in the community, but to also take an active role in helping young people steer clear of substances he knows will do them no good now or even later on in life.

“The protest wasn’t an initiative taken by chief and council, it was an initiative taken by the membership,” the chief said. “It all started with a couple of mothers. One of their children had been getting booze from a local bootlegger and it was a sad sight when they found him passed out on the side of the road from drinking. That’s what encouraged them to organize this rally.”

The chief went on to say the protest attracted hundreds of people and, once they were done drawing attention to the bootlegger’s house, the



A public protest outside a known bootlegger’s home involved young people, elders and chief and council.

group moved on to the home of a known drug dealer.

“We know who these people are, in dealing drugs or selling booze, but without the proper evidence there isn’t much else we can do,” he said. “The protest, however, did manage to chase a couple of drug dealers out of the community because they didn’t like the attention everyone was giving them.”

Now, the chief added, the band council is in the process of updating its bylaws in order to give them more teeth when it comes to forcing these

types of individuals from the reserve permanently.

“We have already conducted four evictions at the homes of drug dealers and at party houses,” he noted. “We recently updated our housing policy to allow for zero tolerance when it comes to that sort of thing. But, again, we can only do so much. That’s why it’s essential to update our bylaws, which will give the RCMP more authority and, hopefully, that will be the long-term solution to helping our kids.”

Housing policy updates and bylaw upkeep, the chief added, is something that originated in recent years at Makwa Sahgaiehan First Nation

“We sort of followed suit – our people were tired of seeing our kids intoxicated and we’re going to assist them in any way we can,” he said. “This sort of thing has been one of the biggest challenges for every Indigenous community. And now that he’s been elected as MLTC tribal chief, (former MSFN chief) Richard Ben is talking about an initiative that will help all nine MLTC bands. It’s a step in the right direction because, if we tackle this problem together, we’re only going to be stronger. In the meantime, my hat goes off to the parents who organized last month’s rally. We all want what is best for our kids.”

According to Sara Iron, the protest has had a small yet positive impact on the overall situation.

“It kind of helped,” she said. “We’re not really seeing as many young people walking down the street drunk or high anymore. Whether that remains the case long-term or not, I don’t know. To make sure that happens, I believe we just need to start enforcing our band bylaws more than we have been.”

Supporting differentiation by using structures in math

By Hillary Hinds, Math Consultant at Meadow Lake Tribal Council, Jan Vandermeer Student Learning Assessment and Report Card Coordinator at Meadow Lake Tribal Council and Cassandra Neufeld, Facilitator, Saskatchewan Professional Development Unit (SPDU).

A math workshop held Oct. 30 was well received as teachers saw it as a well needed Professional Development filled with various structures to support differentiation strategies in the mathematics classroom. The goal of the workshop was to provide participants with the opportunity to experience and examine classroom structures that allow students to move flexibly among various group instruction.

By using structures within the math classroom, the teacher will be able to meet the needs of every child through created differentiated learning experiences.

Participants garner information in the following areas: Understanding structures that support differentiated instruction in mathematics; exploring different structures and instructions that support differentiation for gap filling, grade level teaching and enrichment; and unpacking the curriculum to identify prerequisite skills and grade level skills.

At the end of the workshop, participants had the opportunity to work in groups to plan a math unit of their choice.

This Math workshop was timely as it ties in



Teachers, mostly from the MLTC schools, attended the recent math workshop Oct. 30. At right, facilitators of the workshop were, left to right, Hillary Hinds, Cassandra Neufeld and Jan Vandermeer.

nicely with the MLTC Curriculum Instruction Assessment (CIA) initiative to improve numeracy rates and addressing the wide range of learning gaps in math within the nine MLTC schools through the use of differentiation learning in the math classroom

This training was facilitated by SPDU and hosted



by MLTC. This is the first of this nature for MLTC to host a provincial workshop – as we seek to improve the numeracy level among the nine MLTC schools. Sixteen teachers attended this training, 13 of which were MLTC teachers.

Thanks to all the participants and for SPDU for putting on this workshop.

Jordan's Principle

Mental Health Support



PROGRAM GOAL

To ensure First Nation children have access to the services they need.

Jordan's Principle is a child-first principle that applies equally to all First Nations children, whether resident on or off reserve. It covers health services and social support for First Nation children in situations where the child doesn't have access to publicly funded programs. The Federal government committed up to \$382 million over 3 years, starting in 2016 to March 2019 towards funding Jordan's Principle. MLTC secured some funds through mental health services for 8 MLFN's communities for the period of September 2017 to March 2018. Improving Mental health and healthier youth are two of the five top health priorities according to MLHSDA's 10 year health plan. Jordan's principle is focused on children between the ages of 0 – 18 years old.

Below are highlights of Activities which have been coordinated at the First Nation Level through Jordan's Principle funds (group activities, cultural activities and individual activities). For more information, contact Abdulrahman Araga at (306) 236-5817.

Mental Health/Therapy Support

PROJECT NAME	DESCRIPTION
Land Based Cultural Activities	Cultural teachings and other Cultural activities: i.e., beading, sewing, working with hides, leather, etc.
	Land based survival skills using elders as teachers for hunting, animal tracking, trapping, snaring, fishing, fire making, food preservation, Cree cultural camps and gathering medicine etc.
	Honoring Our Youth Round Dance – ceremonies, round dance, mental self-esteem, team building etc. The youth are being counseled as many are still hurting and grieving family and friends who were lost due to suicide.
	Land Based Youth Programs & After School Activities Land based cultural camps focused on healing the cultural way, healing through ceremonies, sweats, and feasts. Land based hunting trips to identify the cultural aspects missing in the community amongst the youth; cooking meals with what they found in the bush. Teaching the youth the 4 aspects of life and balance (mental, spiritual, physical, and emotional) through cultural medicine wheel lessons.
Therapist Services	Children at risk between the ages 3 -18 years old received both mental health assessments and professional therapist services counselling as needed. These services directly addressed trauma, abuse, suicide ideation, attempts and threats, anxiety, depression etc.
Elder Support Services	Traditional mental health teachings through engagement of the youth and elderly ex: Gender role spirituality and the teaching of belonging, meaning, purpose and hope.
Mental Health Human Resources	A youth mental health position was created to work with the youths, families and community prevention workers. The goal of the initiative was to work with all stakeholders to ensure the best outcomes for the youth either through a family case plan or other methods. This position under the guidance of an elder and therapist will push to empower youth.
Mental Health Related Events	Cyber bullying workshop addressing the impacts of bullying on children & youth. The workshop taught them coping mechanisms. There were workshops on youth addictions and impacts on mental health.

At the 2018 MLTC Leadership Conference, Nov. 19 and 20 in Saskatoon, two Meadow Lake First Nations individuals were acknowledged for their past tribal leadership of the Meadow Lake Tribal Council.

Eric Sylvestre of the Birch Narrows Dene Nation who first served as MLTC Vice-Chief for a number of years and then Tribal Chief from 2010 - 2018, was honoured. Also recognized was former MLTC Vice-Chief Dwayne Lasas of the Waterhen Lake First Nation who held the position from 2011 - 2017.



Former Vice-Chief Dwayne Lasas (left), and former Tribal Chief Eric Sylvestre were recognized in Saskatoon Nov. 19.

For further information, please contact

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