

Meadow Lake First Nations News



Birch Narrows Dene Nation



Buffalo River Dene Nation



Canoe Narrows Cree First Nation



Clearwater River Dene Nation



English River First Nation



Flying Dust First Nation



Makwa Sahgaiehan First Nation



Ministikwan Lake Cree Nation



Waterhen Lake First Nation

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At left, chiefs Carol Bernard (Waterhen Lake), Ronald Mitsuing (Makwa Sahgaiehan), and Leslie Crookedneck (Island Lake) participate in the FSIN assembly. Below, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau receives a beaded gift from one of the chiefs in attendance at the Federation of Sovereign Indigenous Nations Legislative Assembly held May 21-23 on the Flying Dust First Nation.

Prime Minister speaks to FSIN gathering of chiefs

For many in attendance for the last week's spring session of the Federation of Sovereign Indigenous Nations (FSIN) Legislative Assembly at Flying Dust First Nation, the event ended on a high note.

Capping off the three-day session Thursday afternoon (May 23) was a special address from Prime Minister Justin Trudeau who spoke with First Nations chiefs and others on hand about the progress already made between the government and First Nations people, as well as the work that lies ahead to keep that partnership strong.

"I want to start by recognizing we are on the land of the Treaty 6 nations in the Cree community of Flying Dust First Nation," Trudeau remarked. "We acknowledge them as the past, present and future caretakers of this land... Ahead of this event, I was reflecting on the promises I made during the 2015 campaign. I told people the time had come to renew nation-to-nation relationships with First Nations, a relationship based on recognition of rights, respect, cooperation and partnership. I said, if elected, our government would take up that work and make it our priority. Nearly four years later, our priorities have remained unchanged."

The prime minister went on to say, the progress the federal government and First Nations have made together, is a testament to their commitment to do things differently.

~ Cont'd on Page 16



Upcoming Treaty Days - 2019



Treaty Day celebrations have begun on the nine Meadow Lake First Nations. This special day commemorates the signing and the historic relationship formed between the Government of Canada and Indigenous peoples between the 18th and 20th Centuries. Treaty Day also commemorates the annual meeting at which representatives of the federal government distributed treaty payments to members of Indigenous bands who signed the Numbered Treaties. The first of these payments was in 1872 and they are still distributed to this day, although now they are mostly a symbolic gesture. Most descendants of the Numbered Treaties signatories receive \$5 annually – an amount that has not increased over time to reflect inflation. Therefore, these funds are financially insignificant, but they confirm the relationship between Indigenous peoples and the government.

Come celebrate with us!

- | | |
|------------------------------|---------------------------|
| Birch Narrows Dene Nation | Monday, June 3 |
| Canoe Lake Cree First Nation | Tuesday, June 4 |
| Buffalo River Dene Nation | Wednesday, June 5 |
| English River First Nation | Thursday, June 6 |
| Clearwater River Dene Nation | Friday, June 7 |
| Flying Dust First Nation | Tuesday, June 11 |
| Ministikwan Lake Cree Nation | Tuesday, June 18 |
| Waterhen Lake First Nation | Wednesday, June 19 |
- (Makwa Sahgaiehan First Nation held its Treaty Day on May 15)

For further information, please contact:

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A panel of successful band members speaks to students at the Waterhen Lake/Flying Dust Career Exploration Tour May 6. The panel included (l-r) Shaylee Mazuren (university student), Judy Fiddler (teacher), Shanelle Moore (heavy equipment operator), Mike Matchee (teacher) and Angela Fiddler (company union rep). At right, Roseann Iron shows students on a graph the lowest pay – \$1.76 per hour – is social assistance when compared to becoming a carpenter, a nurse or teacher.



Waterhen Lake/Flying Dust career event offers encouragement to youth

A joint Career Exploration Tour hosted by Waterhen Lake and Flying Dust First Nations for Grades 7-12 school students as well as adults was held May 6 at the community school gym at Waterhen Lake. The event was titled 'Your Participation will be your Success'.

The session, held for First Nation students from Flying Dust and Waterhen, began with a career panel of accomplished band members who spoke about their current line of work and offered encouragement to the youth to begin the path of post-secondary studies by creating a path and following it.

The panel included Angela Fiddler (company union rep), Mike Matchee (teacher), Shanelle Moore (heavy equipment operator), Judy Fiddler (teacher) and Shaylee Maureen (university student).

"I work for Civeo as the housekeeping coordinator – we're accommodation specialists and I work in Fort McMurray, AB," said Angela Fiddler, a former resident of

Waterhen. "My role here today is not solely to let the youth know about our company, but more importantly to give them confidence as they search for jobs in the near future."

Fiddler notes it's not easy being Indigenous and working away from home for long periods of time.

"I had to learn and deal with systematic and racial issues, but I found out there are people in most companies out there to help those who need the support," she said. "Some workers have to be gone away from home for up to 20 or more, so it's important youth go through the proper channels because companies want to retain their Indigenous workers."

Fiddler said it's important to continually host career days on reserves because it's easier for her and her colleagues to come in and talk to the students in their home community rather than the students, staff and parents doing all the planning.

Fiddler's main advice was about being in the right frame of mind

after high school when getting to your first job interview.

"You've got to be ready and you've got to be focused because if they offer you the job, it's like right now. The job's not going to wait for you, they have others they can give it to," she said. "My main thing is, it's possible for anyone to get off the reserve and be successful."

Roseann Iron, a social development coordinator with the Meadow Lake Tribal Council, gave students a sampling of what certain careers pay in wages and what additional schooling is required.

"Being on social assistance is the lowest at \$305 per month, that works out to \$1.76 per hour – I don't think you want to be there," Iron said. "Say you wanted to be a carpenter, their average hourly pay is \$18.13 per hour, a nurse can make \$33.22 per hour while a teacher's starting wage is \$25.96."

Iron said for those who do not go on for specific training, can work in a variety of jobs for minimum wage, which is currently \$11.06 per hour.

"So, the reason why we're giving you this information is because we want you to realize social assistance is at the bottom of the pay scale," Iron said, adding police officer, electrician, or social worker salaries range from \$37,000 to over \$110,000 per year. "It's very important you get your maths and sciences during high school as it will open many career opportunities for you in the future."

Iron stated there's more to life than living on the reserve.

"Follow your dreams," she said. "Don't stop at Grade 12, but continue on and remember we are always here to support you."

Creeanna Mirasty, a Grade 10 student in Meadow Lake, was one of about 100 attendees who, after hearing the information, said she'd like to be a social worker when she's done high school.

"The last few years I've babysat a lot and I've also been around foster kids – it's hard to see them come and go, though," she added. "I believe I would be good at it."

Grade 11 students organizing trip overseas

A group of Grade 11 students from Waweyekisik Education Centre at Waterhen Lake First Nation is planning a major trip in 2020 that will take them across the Atlantic Ocean.

"We taking a 10-day trip to Italy and Greece during the Easter break next April," said student Lucas Lapratt. "We chose this location because some of us have been to the (United) States a few times, so we thought we'd go out of the country this time."

Nine students will be taking the trip and the group plans to raise \$50,000 before then to cover plane fare, accommodations, transportation, meals, entry into museums and other special tours and excursions as well as some additional spending money.

Highlights of the trip will be visiting the ancient city of Rome, Venice, the Vatican among others.

"We started with our fundraising



Grade 11 student Lucas Lapratt shows off his passport which just arrived in the mail.

last December with candy gram sales, but our major fundraising

to date has been catering and food sales. So far we have raised about \$10,000," Lapratt said.

One of the first things all nine students and their accompanying chaperones had to do was apply for their respective passports. Lapratt's came just recently, and he was relieved.

"It's been quite a few weeks now since I applied, so it's good it's here now and I don't have to worry anymore," he added.

~ Community Profile

Birch Narrows Dene Nation



BIRCH NARROWS DENE NATION FACTS

Birch Narrows Dene Nation has territory at three sites: 733 acres next to the Northern Hamlet of Turnor Lake is their main community; 395 acres at the junction of Churchill Lake and Frobisher Lake which contains the historic site of Clear Lake; and 6,044 acres east of Dillon on Peter Pond Lake. The latter two have no year-round residents living there.

In the summer of 1906, the Dene people of Clear Lake entered into a treaty relationship with the Canadian government and signed Treaty 10. Then, in 1972, the Clear Lake band, which was then known as Peter Pond First Nation, was split into two bands – both bands lived in and near Buffalo Narrows before moving to Buffalo River near Dillon and Birch Narrows near Turnor Lake, Saskatchewan.

Birch Narrows is located approximately 120 km from Buffalo Narrows and 350 km from Meadow Lake, which is the closest centre with all amenities. About two-thirds of the registered total population in Birch Narrows resides on reserve. There are some 600 members living on reserve and 300 living off-reserve. Both languages, English and Denesuliné, are spoken on the Birch Narrows Dene Nation. The First Nation is affiliated with the Meadow Lake Tribal Council (MLTC).

Chief:

Jonathan Sylvestre

Councillors:

Jonathan L Sylvestre
Dorothy Sylvestre
Kimberly Sylvestre
Ann Sylvestre

Council working toward a happy and healthy community

The Birch Narrows Dene Nation is a relatively new band which came about almost 50 years ago.

Current chief, Jonathan Sylvestre, says their community was originally at Clear Lake – some 40 kilometres away as the crow flies – but because there was no road access, the band was relocated to Turnor Lake and also given a land base as well near Dillon.

“Our land here is very small, but this is home to us,” Sylvestre said. “Our biggest territory, which is almost 10 times as big, is over near Dillon on Peter Pond Lake.

He was first voted to council in 2010 at age 23.

“I was pretty young when I first got involved and didn’t know a lot about politics at the time,” Sylvestre admits. “But, I was a leader in high school and people looked up to me. Several band members asked me to throw my name in, so I did. As it turned out I had the highest number of votes at that time.”

Then, before the 2014 election, community members asked him to run for chief. He won and was then re-elected in 2018. Jonathan is now in his fifth year as chief and has the distinction of being the youngest First Nations chief in all of Saskatchewan.

“I realized early on that I can’t please everybody,” he said. “But, as long as I have a vision, I will work toward that vision. I’d like to see a happy and healthy community and see our kids prosper and be successful in school.”

The community continues to grow and the leadership is doing its best with what they have.

“With growth comes challenges and we know drugs and alcohol are a problem, but we’re working on awareness and prevention,” he said. “Unfortunately we are limited in resources and have to rely on government funding for nearly everything we do.”

An example is the money that flows from Jordan’s Principle, a fairly new federal program through Indigenous Services. “It’s support for children 19 years and younger who need help right away and for making long-term changes for their future,” Sylvestre said. “We submit an application to the program which covers a wide range of health, social and educational needs.”

In Birch Narrows, some of these funds go toward land-based traditional teachings and healing.

“But, we can’t get used to this money because there’s an election coming up and all this could change overnight,” he added.

Sylvestre has big dreams.

“I want to see our community become self-sufficient and be successful,” he said. “I know that’s a long ways off, but we have to act now and push our students to look toward post-



Chief Jonathan Sylvestre, 33, is in his fifth year as chief of Birch Narrows Dene Nation with big dreams to have his community grow and prosper.

secondary studies so they create their own opportunities.”

With community growth, no matter how hard everyone works, Sylvestre notes people still fall through the cracks.

“We try to aim at our most vulnerable – the youth and the elders. For me, and others who are middle aged, we can look after ourselves,” he said. “We do what we can. We hire locals to work in the band-owned store, our school system, our health facilities as well as our Zander Lake fly-in camp. We also have ongoing training through SIIT. Right now there’s training going on for carpentry and home renovation/construction. Other training we’ve had, and will continue to have as long as there’s interest, is heavy equipment operator, class 1 truck driver training, safety tickets and more. We find out what community members are in favour of and we try to bring those courses to Birch Narrows.”

Birch Narrows sits right next to the hamlet of Turnor Lake and Sylvestre says together they share the youth programs and arena functions.

Set on giving their best, and more opportunities for their community, the council has held three open band meetings per year for community awareness and an opportunity for members to ask questions.

Zander Lake camp to get upgrade before summer

The community of Birch Narrows Dene Nation at one time owned and operated a fly-in fishing camp for tourists and hunters, but not longer uses it for those purposes.

“It’s now a year-round recreation site. It’s remote as there’s no road to it, so it takes about 15 minutes to fly there. There’s cabins and our community members use it for special gatherings and this summer holistic wellness camps will be offered,” said Zander Lake camp coordinator Tiffany Moberly. “The first five-day camp is scheduled to begin near the end of June with ongoing camps running throughout the summer months.”

Open to northern community residents – La Loche, Clearwater, Buffalo Narrows, Buffalo River, Birch Narrows and all those nearby – Moberly said there’s leadership training and many workshops including land-based traditional and cultural teachings.

“We have elders involved, traditional knowledge keepers, mental health workers, nurses and other personnel at these camps,” she said.

Vancouver trip June 7-17

In the middle of June some 30 students in Grades 10-12, and 12 chaperones, will travel by bus from Birch Narrows to Vancouver, B.C. to participate in the Scared Street Tour and other highlights in the area. The drug and alcohol prevention and education program takes young people on tours throughout Vancouver’s east side.

“When I was a youth I remember going to Vancouver

for this same trip,” said chief Jonathan Sylvestre. “It was a real eye opener for me and I can still remember Circle Time and some of the personal stories I heard. It’s not pretty, but it definitely shows youth where drugs and alcohol can take you... it takes over your life.”

The trip also includes a bit of fun – the Capilano Suspension Bridge Park and going up Grouse Mountain.

“We want to give our youth experiences, so hopefully they’ll bring back what they learned and help contribute to our community,” added Sylvestre.

Clear Lake Days July 29- Aug 2

This event happens at the original home of the Birch Narrows people. It’s a one-hour boat ride and band members will stay for the five-day event, while others may choose to stay longer.

“We go there to bring awareness to our people of where we came from,” Sylvestre. “We have a church service at the graveyard where many of our family members are buried. It’s a place where we can keep our traditions alive... we can’t forget who we are and our identity.”

Annual Family Camp

This is family-oriented for everyone from babies to people in their 80s. It started about 15 years ago and the location is only accessible by boat – about a 35-minute ride. The activities include a variety of workshops, traditional teachings and more.



Tiffany Moberly exits the plane with the help of pilot Barry Obrien. Moberly and councillor Kim Sylvestre returned from assessing what needs to be done at the Zander Lake camp the next few weeks.



Dwayne Morin and Lyndon Sylvestre get barrels of fuel ready to take to Zander Lake that will be used for outboard motors and generators.

School serves more than 200 students

Birch Narrows Dene Community School accommodates both First Nation and neighbouring Métis students from the hamlet of Turnor Lake. Enrolled are approximately 220 students from the Headstart/ Nursery program to Grade 12.

Vice-principal Karen Sylvestre was born and raised in Birch Narrows and has been back home the past six years. She received her teaching degree from NORTEP in LaRonge and was the Grade 4 teacher at the Birch Narrows Community Dene School in 2013 and 2014. She has been the head of student services the last three years

“It’s my second year in this position – student services and vice-principal and I just love that we have a new high school,” she said, adding the new K-12 school was built in 2009. “When I was in high school we had to travel out – to La Loche or attend the residential school at Beauval. I chose to go to the residential school and was there from 1991 to 1994.”

There are 18 teachers on staff, but 43 people in total work at the school in various departments.

One of the thing Sylvestre admires about the school is the kids are very respectful as evidenced by having no graffiti or vandalism at the school.



Shalen Moberly, one of seven graduating students this year, helps decorate for the grad ceremony June 3.

“We have a beautiful school because our students have a lot of pride in their surroundings and we often receive compliments from visitors about how well our students are behaved,” she said.

A subject offered this past year was Dene language classes and Sylvestre said the youngest ones – headstart and nursery students – are now going home

saying phrases in Dene and showing their parents how they can count to 10 and say their colours in the traditional language. She added the Dene language classes and the land-based teachings (both new this year) are very popular with the students.

“We’re hoping to offer more high school subjects in the future because I really think it makes a difference in keeping the students engaged,” she said.

Outside classroom studies, every April school students and the entire community participate in what they call Sucker Bridge Week.

“This is where we take our students, and anyone from the community who wants to, down to the bridge and we catch fish, fillet and smoke them – it’s a super fun time as it’s not even a mile from town. Other schools in the area participate as well.”

Sylvestre says there’s a real sense of community here. “I love being from Birch Narrows. The school offers so many things to community members and I’m proud to be a part of that,” she said. “Once a month we hold a community night here at the school and we always get a big turnout – the whole community shows up.”

“I can truly say this school is the hub of the community,” she added.





Dancing to the beat

Culture and tradition were front and centre Friday through Sunday (May 24-26) when Canoe Lake Cree First Nation held its annual powwow. The event attracted participants from throughout the region, across the province and beyond and serves as one of the early stops of the yearly powwow season. A modern powwow is a social gathering held by many First Nations communities to meet and dance, sing, socialize, and honour their cultures. There is generally a dancing competition, with many different types of traditional dances, music and regalia, often with significant prize money awarded. Above, eagle-staff bearers and other participants showcase their pride during Sunday afternoon's grand entry. At right, men's golden age dancer Harry Ohrn dances his style upon entering the powwow grounds Sunday afternoon.



FSIN makes history with first sitting prime minister to attend assembly

Flying Dust First Nation chief Jeremy Norman, in his address to those in attendance, acknowledged and thanked his community members for making everyone feel welcome.

"It's been a very busy couple of weeks for our staff and I want to thank them publicly for pitching in to make this event run smoothly," he said. "I'd also like to thank the FSIN for thinking of us and hosting your assembly in another place other than Saskatoon – here in the North. It certainly makes us feel more part of the organization."

Norman, in his closing comments, spoke candidly to the visiting chiefs in attendance.

"I'd like to share a little story about this facility," he said. "This facility was a dream of our community about nine years ago. At that time we came in as a new council and the chief of the day said, 'let's not think small'. And then ideas started coming out and the more we thought about it, the more we realized we could go big, not small. And here we are today. So, as leaders I know you're in a tough position, but I encourage you to think big and good things will come of it."

Trudeau later said his

government has focused on the most pressing needs in First Nations communities as identified by First Nations

"In the time since we started this important work, we've seen some real results," he noted. "We've started building nearly 16,000 safe and affordable housing units on reserve, and since March 2016 our government has invested \$2.72 billion in support of 3,797 infrastructure projects in your communities across the country. We also made historic investments in drinking water systems on First Nations to ensure every First Nation person living on reserve has clean and safe drinking water. As of this April, 83 long-term drinking water advisories have been lifted."

Trudeau also spoke about the support his government has given Jordan's principle – a child first and needs-based principle used in Canada to ensure First Nations children living on and off reserve have equitable access to all government funded services.

Thanks to the government's approach to education, Trudeau added, the Liberals have also ensured children in First Nations

communities get the same funding as non-Indigenous children.

The prime minister also said these and other issues are ones the government continues to work on every day in an effort to resolve them or to find even better solutions.

"We know the legacy of centuries of colonialism can't be solved in just a few years and with one mandate," he said. "Chronic gaps in housing, clean water, education, good jobs, child services are a direct result of old colonial structures we've only slowly started to dismantle... For far too long, your call for justice has been dismissed, for far too long you let communities suffer alone while the perpetrators go unpunished destroying any kind of trust in the system. To rebuild that trust, words must be paired with actions."

Together, Trudeau added, the federal government and First Nations have reached major milestones.

"Milestones we should celebrate and use to propel us forward," he stated. "I stand here today honoured to be among you knowing our work is not done. We still have a long road ahead

of us filled with challenges and hurdles we will have to overcome as partners. But, together, we have laid the groundwork for a new nation-to-nation relationship.

A relationship built on trust, partnership and mutual respect. For the first time in our history we are undoing the legacies of colonialism and racism that held back communities for far too long."

Among those pleased with what Trudeau had to say was Meadow Lake Tribal Council chief Richard Ben.

"It was an honour having the prime minister of Canada attend our assembly," Ben said. "Being he was the first sitting prime minister to attend makes it an historic event. We look forward to more future dialogue with the Government of Canada and creating more partnerships."

Also speaking directly to the FSIN chiefs and councillors at the assembly included federal NDP party leader Jagmeet Singh; federal minister of Crown - Indigenous Relations Carolyn Bennett; and federal Indigenous Services minister Seamus O'Regan, among others.

New in-house security officers patrol Flying Dust



Six new reserve security officers – Blayne Aubichon, Adrian Piche, Terrance Bear, Janelle Fiddler, Jordan Lachance and Blake Derocher

Six new reserve security officers – Terrance Bear, Adrian Piche, Blayne Aubichon, Blake Derocher, Janelle Fiddler and Jordan Lachance – are now helping keep the peace on the Flying Dust First Nation.

“These six recently graduated from a 12-week job readiness program and four weeks of security guard training,” said Flying Dust chief Jeremy Norman. “It’s a definite need in our community and that’s why we made it happen.”

The chief said staff, whether it’s at the band-owned fuel station, local school or administration office, will be able to feel more at ease knowing someone’s watching out for them and their colleagues.

“We’ve had some issues in the past at the fuel station,” Norman said. “By having security there

all the time, the people working no longer have to deal with some of the verbal abuse they unfortunately experienced from certain individuals.”

Besides the fuel station, the security team provides personal safety to staff at the band’s administration office.

“At times we’ve had some of our people get pretty worked up asking for their welfare cheque early, so we’ve instructed our new security to be present at the reception counter near the front entrance,” Norman added.

Team leader Darren Lachance noted another important area where the security officers will be located is at Kohpahwakenum Elementary School.

“They’ll be patrolling the school regularly being on the lookout for

suspicious vehicles,” he said.

New security officer, Terrance Bear, is pleased with his new job.

“I joined because I want community members to be safe in whatever they’re doing,” said the 26 year old. “I like being out in the community, really enjoy this line of work and appreciate the opportunity to serve and protect people and their property in my own community. We’re not here to be seen as a threat, but rather to keep the community safe.”

The Flying Dust security officer will support and enforce FDFN policies. Although they will not be allowed to go into incidents where their safety could be at risk, it is hoped they can help address violent crime by acting as mediators to prevent disputes from escalating. If situations become

violent, the RCMP will be called.

Down the road these security officers will patrol the streets at night to deter criminal behaviour and act as additional eyes and ears for the police.

The First Nation is now in the process of hiring its own community safety officer (CSO).

Chief Norman said a band member is presently in training for this position.

Last week the security team received their biggest major event right off the bat.

“I’m really proud of our team at the FSIN assembly May 21-23,” said Darren Lachance. “In the next two months we’ll be in full force at the rodeo in Meadow Lake, the Father’s Day demolition derby, Treaty Day and the Saskatchewan Summer Games.”



Powwow celebration

The 20th annual Makwa Sahgaiehcan First Nation held its 2019 powwow indoors at the Jason Morningchild Memorial Arena May 18-20 where there was drumming, singing and dancing as people of all ages gathered for the annual cultural event.

At left, nine-year-old Kyleigha Moostoos of the Big Island Lake First Nation competes in the Jr. Girls Jingle Dance division.

Below, Meagan Dreaver and her three-year-old son, Renan, of Saskatoon, take a break to talk about the type of dance steps to be used in the next round of songs.

