

# Meadow Lake First Nation News



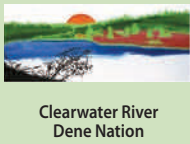
Birch Narrows Dene Nation



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



November 2019

Volume 2 • Issue 11

## NINE BANDS STRONG Richard Derocher is new Vice-Chief

A veteran councillor on the Flying Dust First Nation, Richard Derocher is the newly elected vice-chief of the Meadow Lake Tribal Council and will serve a four-year term effective immediately.

A large crowd gathered Nov. 22 at the Saskatoon Inn where voting delegates – chief and council members of all nine Meadow Lake First Nations – first listened to the two candidates (Derocher and Robert Sylvester of the Birch Narrows Dene Nation) before marking an X for their choice. Derocher was victorious by a 25-22 count.

The chief and four delegates representing each Cree First Nation, which includes Canoe Lake, Flying Dust, Makwa Sahgaiehan, Ministikwan Lake and Waterhen Lake, were eligible to vote along with the chief and five delegates from each of the Dene bands – Birch Narrows, Buffalo River, Clearwater River and English River. In total there were 49 eligible votes.

Following the announcement, Derocher, who has been a band councillor for 16 years, took to the podium and first thanked his nominators, Tyson Bear and Marie Gladue, both fellow councillors on the Flying Dust First Nation.

Bear has much respect for Derocher as a friend and mentor.

“To me, Richard’s vision is big enough for all our First Nations,” Bear said.

Derocher referred to himself as an Oskapios, a helper.

“I am honoured to be selected to work at the next level,” he said. “To help others, to help all the nine First Nations.”

The morning of last Friday’s conference started out with a heavy heart for the Makwa Sahgaiehan First Nation and the MLTC crisis team. The community had just suffered another suicide the previous day – this time a 10-year-old girl. It was the band’s third suicide in the month of November. The other two were a 40-year-old man and a 14 year old. The band has declared itself in a state of crisis.

Derocher noted how a similar tragedy brought his family closer together, and how being together, helped them get through it together.

“We need to talk about our communities as fathers, mothers, parents, and chapans,” Derocher said. “We need to attack our issues, as people.”

Sylvester, a former chief of 16 years at Birch Narrows, spoke to the delegates prior to the vote with emotion and empathy, acknowledging the difficulty Makwa Sahgaiehan First Nation was going through at the moment.

“Historically the tribal council has provided programs and services based on government criteria, but we need to be more innovative and creative for our youth,” he said. “Now is the time for MLTC to respond to every community’s interest. My first order of business, if elected, is to listen to each of your chief and council’s concerns – each community has a different need and each community has to hold the MLTC accountable.”

Makwa Sahgaiehan chief Ronald Mitsuing was not in attendance for the vote due to the fact he had gone home to be with his community. MSFN councillor Tom Littlepruce, on chief Mitsuing’s behalf, spoke of the recent loss of youth on their reserve.

“I am concerned about policy roadblocks and political brickwalls,” Littlepruce said. “I am glad during this leadership conference we are speaking about restructuring the health and youth departments. First Nations communities have to deal with real events on their communities. Real painful events.”

He appreciated the prayers and comments of condolences for Makwa Sahgaiehan First Nation.

“But, we need more than prayers,” he said. “Please come to the front line. Help us First Nations, untie our hands from the bureaucracy, and help us save our kids. Help us write proposals and grants that will help us find the funds.”

Tribal chief Richard Ben agreed. “We need to work together,” he said. “We are nine bands strong and we need to help each other like we used to back in the day. We need to help our youth see the same vision and hope for the future.”



Photos (top to bottom) Newly-elected MLTC Vice-Chief Richard Derocher speaks to delegates prior to the vote Nov. 22; runner-up Robert Sylvester (right) of the Birch Narrows Dene Nation congratulates Derocher immediately following the result; Lionel Ernest and the Dene Drummers sing the Honour Song to Richard Derocher.





~ Community Profile

# Canoe Lake Cree First Nation



The Canoe Lake Cree First Nation leaders, chief John Iron, headmen Baptiste Iron, and Jerome Couilloneur, signed Treaty 10 on Sept. 19, 1906.

At that time the band occupied a very large region with varied resources. Band members lived mostly by hunting, trapping, and fishing as their primary food source.

Chief John Iron and his headmen asked his band "be allowed to remain on the grounds which they had always occupied, and that they be given a reserve. According to Max Iron of Canoe Lake, John Iron's grandson, the band had wanted to settle permanently at Canoe Lake for specific reasons: the ground was good for gardening and also the situation of the lake; they saw the meadows that would be good for animals, and for hay; they came to the narrows and the bay here for good shelter from the big lake; it was all good and they saw that all the rivers and streams came into Canoe Lake – Arsenault River, McCusker River, Durocher Lake, and Keeley Lake, as well as other rivers; there's only one outlet and that's the Canoe River, so they picked this area.

Today, there are more than 2,000 total band members with almost 1,000 living on-reserve about 75 kms north of Meadow Lake. (\*source: Memoranda Re: The Indians of Treaty No. 10)



Chief: Francis X. Iron

**Councillors:**  
Ralph Opikokew,  
Lenny Iron, Lorne Iron,  
Wilfred Iron, Bernice Iron,  
Roxanne Gamble



Traditional dancer Jason Daniels leads the grand entry of the 13th annual Miksiw School Youth Conference.

## Band leadership working toward self-sufficiency

When Francis X. Iron first became chief of the Canoe Lake Cree First Nation in 2016, he ran because he wanted to serve the community.

"You can't go in thinking you're going to change everything," he recalls. "There is a process for everything, you have to build for change and build for something to look forward to."

He found leadership as a process. "It's like your community has to get to know you in a different way," he says. "Or maybe I have to get used to seeing myself the way the community sees me – as a leader. I only wanted to be a part of my community's road to self-sufficiency."

Since being elected Iron has focused much of his work on partnerships. "We're in partnership with a construction company called 306 of which we own 51 per cent," he says. "Our Eagles Lake Gas Bar & Store is up and running solid. With partnerships with 306 and another, Treotech Enterprises, we're also in talks with potash. There are so many possibilities out there – we just have to find the right fit that works for us."

On the band level, Iron has confidence in the departments of his community. "We're always trying to separate the business from politics," he says. "We trust the health director, Cecelia Opokokew, because she knows how to run her department."

Likewise, the school has its own management running their day-to-day activities.

"The principal runs the school," confirms Iron. "We only get involved if they want our support. At the recent youth conference we were there at opening

ceremonies offering encouragement to all who attended."

Iron is also proud of the band's housing department.

"Since I have been chief, we have built 31 band houses," he adds, noting funds for these residences are the result of receiving grants.

He says Canoe Lake Cree First Nation has avoided home building loans, especially in housing, which would have, in the future, kept the community in debt for 25 years.

"We work closely, and have a good working relationship, with a building supplier in Meadow Lake because they give back to our community," Iron says. "It means a lot to our community because they donate to some of our unfunded programs. For example, we might take a Grade 5 class to an NHL game – half of that class has never been to the city. That's a big reason why we do business with that particular company."

Iron is an avid supporter of the youth in his community because he sees them as their future.

After the recreation staff take the kids for an outing, Iron says many return with big smiles on their faces.

"We can thank the federal program, Jordan's Principle, for that funding," he adds.

Among the many great events held in the community each year the annual powwow is of great significance.

"It was a dream of my late father, Frank Iron, from when he was chief," Iron says. "The first year I was chief we had the elders organize it and there were more than 500 dancers and 12

drum groups. When I looked around at the crowd, and heard the beat of the drum in our home community, it was just amazing."

Today there are at least 40 dancers from CLCFN who participate. The powwow has become a way of life for the community of Canoe Lake.

"These days we have the youth and the adults learning to powwow dance and we have a drum group that has started up," he adds proudly. "We are all learning – even myself – I am re-learning my language, just by continuing to use it."

The leadership of Canoe Lake Cree First Nation is aided by an elders' council. This group represents everyone – all the families, all the clans – in the community.

"What I love about my community, is that they treat our elders real well. And, our elders tell us when we are doing well and when we are not. Some of their advice dates back to the first (Pierre) Trudeau government," Iron says.

Canoe Lake Cree First Nation also has something to look forward to. Iron says a new cultural centre and a headstart daycare, with land based programming, is in the works.

The community continues to strive toward self-sufficiency, which the chief says, includes diversification.

"We do travel a lot, and it's important we travel," he says. "We have to be out there making new partnerships. Because the markets are always fluctuating, we also need to diversify. And, I believe, everyone has to be able to diversify – it's the road to success to self-sufficiency."

## Youth empowered by youth at conference

Canoe Lake youth have – for the 13th time – organized a conference aimed at topics they want discussed with invited guests they want to hear from.

Deanna Woodward, a Grade 11 student at Miksiw School on the Canoe Lake Cree First Nation, and one of this year's committee members said, "It started off with our first conference bringing us all together. It's a chance for us youth to listen to different speakers talk about how they got over their struggles."

Entitled *Sunsets Prove that Endings Can be Beautiful*, the youth conference attracted 220 students from Canoe Lake and surrounding communities. There were workshops covering many topics including addiction, suicide prevention, art therapy, business planning, robotics and music.

This year the students invited Michael Linklater, a world champion basketball player who also happens to be a Cree and the face of Nike's N7 shoe as the keynote speaker.

Linklater said his main message is always the same.

"If you can see yourself achieving something, then work toward that goal. One of my greatest motivations was naysayers, people who told me my dreams were too high."

Another of the invited guests was Heaven Smith, a singer/songwriter from Pinehouse, who has been a speaker/presenter the last four years.

One of the workshop presenters was Pura Fé, an American Tuscarora

Nation singer-songwriter, musician, composer, teacher and activist who is also the founding member of the Native American women's a cappella trio Ulali.

Pura Fé supports the concept of the event.

"This conference is not only a great opportunity for the community of Canoe Lake to draw closer, but also for the surrounding youth to attend something that supports another school."

Woodward agrees.

"It's a mixture of traditional and contemporary events. We started with the Pipe and we had our leaders open up with some words. And, I think this is what we need as youth, our leaders, our chiefs sharing with us, opening up to us."

Vice-principal Geraldine Rediron says the youth conference is an important event for the Canoe Lake Miksiw School.

"The youth need more in our communities, so we keep the youth involved. We have a youth committee that we empower to take the leadership role," she said.

Students found the event not only engaging, but full of information to support their futures.

Nicholas Opikokew, a Grade 11 student, was happy to see something he helped organize come to fruition.

"It was good to help youth from other schools, and I also got a picture of people and their careers. It's helping me decide what to study after

high school," he said.

Fellow Grade 11 student, Dalton Durocher, enjoyed the music workshops.

"It was something we can all relate to. We all need music, love music, and here we can learn how to use music to heal ourselves," he said.

They both agree next year's event will be something they look forward to planning.

Woodward and Opikokew led a workshop on reconciliation for visiting students from other schools.

"We are here in this youth conference to speak the truth and to learn the truth. We are here to learn from the past, like the '60s scoop. When the kids came back from Residential School, they were so afraid to talk about what it was really like. We lost our communication skills and one of those skills was our own languages," said Woodward from her workshop notes.

Principal Vince Ahenakew of Ros-signal High School in Ile-a-la Crosse was impressed by their presentation.

"I was expecting adults talking reconciliation and left impressed the youth conference was completely student led," said Ahenakew, noting students from his school are also planning a youth conference next spring.

Vice-principal Rediron said the Canoe Lake students are looking to the future.

"In the second morning of the youth conference, they were already talking about next year," she added.



As part of the youth conference, John Iron III (centre) was on hand to show the students a special medal as he is presently the holder of the Treaty 10 Medal (shown at top) due to his ancestor being the chief who signed Treaty 10. The medal, which is only on display at special occasions, has an image of King Edward VII.



Students and staff make the sign of 13 at the youth conference at Miksiw School on the Canoe Lake Cree First Nation.



Pura Fé (second from right), a singer/songwriter/musician, leads a drum workshop at the conference.



Michael Linklater (left) was the keynote speaker at the youth conference and spoke of achieving your dreams. He is a champion basketball player and last year he and the Saskatchewan Rattlers won the 2019 Canadian Elite Basketball Championship. Here, he poses with Kayley Iron along with his team's trophy.

### MLTC Newsletter for information contact:

Meadow Lake Tribal Council  
8003 Flying Dust Reserve  
Meadow Lake, SK S9X 1T8  
Phone: 306-236-5654  
Fax: 306-236-6301

Email: receptionist@mltc.net

website: www.mltc.net • ©MLTC 2019



# New ERFN council officially sworn in

Although an overcast sky on the English River First Nation threatened snow Nov. 6, the new leadership envisioned a completely different forecast during a swearing-in ceremony, 12 days following the band's 2019 election.

Six candidates were elected Oct. 25 as councillors – Jenny Wolverine, Randy McIntyre, Katrina Maurice (Eaglechild), Megan Gar, Irene Apesis and Sandra Wolverine, the only returning councillor. Jerry Bernard defeated five other candidates to become chief.

Maurice ran in the election because of her work background in Child and Family Services as a youth worker and her experience volunteering in the recreation department. She saw a new opportunity for youth to look at themselves differently. She has been given the recreation, justice and youth development portfolio, a position the mother of three had hoped for.

"I love my community, especially when I see the talent and culture my community brings to the table. With programming, we can help our children grow up healthy," she said.

One of her goals is to build a volunteer base to support the com-



English River First Nation's new chief and council following the swearing-in ceremony Nov. 6

munity's youth. She also hopes to build a greater sense of community.

"Some of us grew up lucky, we had a wood stove, we had to haul water and cut wood," she said. "Nowadays, you don't see that. I think that is what we hope to bring back to our community, a sense of old times, tradition and unity."

One of the plans brought forward has already been initiated.

"We were approached by the RCMP to start an aboriginal cadet program," said Maurice. "At our first meet and greet we had 16 youth, plus parents from our community showing up."

Another new council member, Randy McIntyre, says he ran for the people in his community, for the river and diversity.

He is hitting the ground running. "My office is already full of sticky notes," he said. "Clipboards are out and I have community members in and out of the office already. We have renovations on the to-do list."

He says one change he has noticed is his own attitude about appropriate attire.

"I feel like I have to dress nice now. I can't wear camo all the time. I'm going to head out and buy some jeans," he laughs.

After 18 years working in the mines, McIntyre has chosen to leave that career for this new position.

"My family supports me and my children like that I will be home more often. My children are teenagers, but in my mind they are six and nine

because I have always been away at work in the mines," he said.

McIntyre is confident and supports the band's choice of Bernard for chief.

"Chief Jerry Bernard comes from a background of hard work and team building," McIntyre said. "This is what they (band members) like about Bernard – he gives us a sense of calm."

After the oath of office ceremony, which included the Dene Drummers, community members and former chief Lawrence McIntyre congratulated and applauded the new chief and council.

"Don't build me a house," new chief Bernard said. "I'll stay with my extended family up here – build a house for families that need them. This is what our community needs."

# Conference in Quebec makes friends of strangers

Despite being members of the same First Nation, before Oct. 27-30 Aubrey-Anne Laliberte-Pewapisconias and Alexandra Jarrett hadn't met. The two were on the same national youth committee at CANDO's annual conference in Gatineau, QC.

Not only are they both members of Canoe Lake Cree First Nation, but both are studying business at the University of Saskatchewan.

CANDO is a national Indigenous organization involved in community economic development. The organization aims to help build capacity to strengthen Indigenous economies by providing programs and services to economic development officers. This year's theme was *Bridging The Gap: Unlocking Opportunities*.

Laliberte-Pewapisconias' interest in business studies began in high school when she heard a motivational speaker who said the Indigenous world has enough teachers and social workers. He challenged the students to learn business.

"What motivated me the most was when he said, 'We need to insert ourselves into business settings and into environments where we haven't always felt welcome,'" she said.

Laliberte-Pewapisconias says not only are there not enough women studying business, there also aren't enough Indigenous women. Attending university is a huge step for

anyone leaving high school, she said, and hasn't found that to be the case.

"I do have moments," Laliberte-Pewapisconias said. "Sometimes, I would have preferred learning psychology, but at the end of the day, commerce is where I am at."

Jarrett graduated from Carpenter High School with an 18-month-old son and very high math grades.

"My guidance counsellor asked me what I want to do. I said I wanted to be a humanitarian. She said, 'That's not a thing. It won't pay the bills.' She said I had the grades for commerce."

Jarrett applied for scholarships, and along with money she saved, she eventually had enough to go to university. She has never received funding from her First Nation, which she says some of her peers find amazing.

Once she had left her community, Jarrett realized she had also moved away from her support system.

"I have to juggle a lot, co-parent and work 30 hours a week," she said.

Jarrett is working on a degree in marketing because it's the most applicable to her current business which provides services in photography, graphic design, web design, social media and community surveys.

"What I do and have done already with my company is travel to First Nations and helped them develop a community survey," she said.

Jarrett's goal is to inspire youth to



MLTC Tribal Chief Richard Ben alongside Canoe Lake Cree First Nation members Alexandra Jarrett (left) and Aubrey-Anne Laliberte-Pewapisconias (right).

figure out at a young age what it is they like doing, then help them find the supports to do so.

As a youth on Eagle's Lake, she and a few others were paid to cut grass and clean elders' yards which, although great, she says they weren't learning anything they were interested in.

"There were no programming funds in arts, music, dance or hunting," she said.

University has presented challenges for Jarrett, and as a result has had to take some time off.

"I hate to be cliché, but I had babysitters that didn't show and I started to miss class, started to fall behind," she said. "I realized I had to motivate myself, and I learned how to encour-

age myself."

Laliberte-Pewapisconias says it's important to know Indigenous youth can be strong together. She says it's easy to feel alone in this world, but it's important to know your worth.

"Your worth is knowing your own smarts," she said. "Knowing what you can accomplish once you put your mind to it."

What they both took away from the CANDO conference, was the Unlocking Opportunities aspect of the conference theme.

"I would say that it is scary to build a vision for your future, but it's worth it," Jarrett said. "Build on happiness, laughter, and learn who you are. Rebuild your tribe. People who are at your side."