

Meadow Lake First Nation News

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PROGRAM PROFILE

LLRC and the LifeSpark app

Land, Language, Relationships and Culture (LLRC) is an initiative that supports language acquisition and cultural identity in all areas of education, particularly in four areas: access, knowledge, participation, values and beliefs.



Abby Janvier



Gwen Cubban

The LLRC program started five years ago which at the time included flashcards, games and key phrases. Although these are still being used today, the LLRC team consists of Abby Janvier (Dene language consultant) and Gwen Cubban (Cree language consultant). Through school, community and elder consultation, the two develop resource material specific to each community within the Meadow Lake First Nations.

MLTC's Assistant Superintendent of Education, Celia Deschambeault, says there was such a demand for this that Dene and Cree consultants were hired. The goal within the LLRC is to provide the schools with more than one language using pictures instead of the written word. The Accelerated Second Language Acquisition (ASLA) method of teaching oral language has been developed and is now being promoted in all MLTC schools.

ASLA was formulated by Dr. Neyo-oxet Greymorning and he will be one of the keynote speakers at the MLTC Full Circle Conference entitled Empowering Our Youth Through Land, Language, Relationships and Culture. The event takes place March 18-20, 2020 at the Saskatoon Inn.

Gwen Cubban, originally from Canoe Lake Cree First Nation, has

taught at the Makwa Sahgaiehcan First Nation School, Jonas Samson Middle School and Carpenter High School.

"I've been teaching since 2015," says Cubban, adding her first teaching job was the Grade 7-9 Native Studies/Cree class at Jonas Samson. "I also taught Grade 10 and 11 Cree class at Carpenter."

Cubban and Janvier design and provide educational resources which help provide activities to use with the Cree and Dene language programs.

"My job is to create more hands-on and interactive activities by using the smart board and the tablets in the classrooms," says Cubban.

Total Physical Response, another element of the LLRC program, is geared towards young learners.

"TPR is when you learn the language by using your body as well as saying it out loud. For example, jump, kwas ku ti: we would use the American sign language and we would also jump. The kids say the word, they make the sign language and they also jump."

Cubban travels to the five MLTC Cree reserves and notes one of her favourite parts of her job is learning new words, especially old Cree words from the elders in the community.

Another way of reaching out to kids that are into their cell phones and tablets is through the new LifeSpark app. MLTC is utilizing this app to record and preserve their First Nations languages and both Janvier and Cubban are involved.

"This is a way we are reaching out to kids," says Janvier, adding the voice of the LifeSpark App is Clementine Lariviere, an elder from Canoe Lake Cree First Nation. The LifeSpark App will be debuting at the MLTC Education teachers' Full Circle Conference next month

Abby Janvier, a member of Clearwater River Dene Nation, began working with MLTC Education in August 2019.

"I've been a teacher with the Northwest School Division and Clearwater River Dene Nation for a total of five years," said Janvier. "Even though I taught Dene before I didn't have the knowledge I have right now."

She has become more aware and also feels more responsible to create more resources in areas that are currently lacking.

"We are able to immerse ourselves into the language and culture, whereas in the non-Indigenous school setting there isn't the immersion," adds Cubban.

Janvier agrees.

"A lot of our youth are fluent in Dene because they speak Dene at home," she says. "This makes their knowledge of the Dene language more active. When I applied, I knew I was qualified, but now I just feel really honoured to be a part of the life of our language."

Janvier speaks highly of Cheryle Herman who is one of three MLTC superintendents of education.

"She did a lot of my work before I started. She translated a dictionary and a few books from English to Dene – one of which was a phrase book."

Janvier says the earlier grades love to speak and learn Cree, while the older grades are more comfortable with hearing and writing Cree.

"That is one of our focal points for this program – to revitalize the Cree language," clarifies Cubban, adding she was always interested in this type of work.

"What I love about this work is that I didn't think that I would get to this part of my career so quickly," she says.

"I always tell the elders to just speak to me in Cree. Language, it's more than just words, it is thought as well."

Cubban is grateful to the Kokoms, Mosoms, and Chapans group at the Canoe Lake Miksiw School which helped her with some translations.

Career Expo 2020



MLTC staff, who organized and facilitated the Career Expo at each of the nine Meadow Lake First Nations, (l-r) Rozalyn Iron, Chris Mazuren and Rose Ann Iron.

The doorway to the future

From Jan. 27 to Feb. 6, staff from MLTCs department of economic development, social development and pre-employment joined forces and travelled to the nine bands that make up the Meadow Lake First Nations for a Career Expo in their respective communities.

Chris Mazuren and Rozalyn Iron both from the MLTC Employment Services office organized the second annual Career Expo. It was a mixture of industry and education and on hand were representatives from the University of Regina, University of Lethbridge, RCMP, Canadian Armed Forces, Fort Mackay Group of Companies, NorSask Forest Products, and Saskatchewan Apprenticeship and Trades among others.

The Career Expo's focus was more on the youth in Grade 12 and the adults in the community. However, the fair also encouraged Grades 7-9 students to attend to begin considering their future.

"The Grade 7 group have half a decade to think and set their career goals," says Mazuren. "We made

leaps and bounds in our partnerships and we've been invited to travel to Alberta to solidify projects, and establish further connections with the industries for our MLTC clients."

During the nine stops of the career expo, there were more than 2,500 attendees bringing Mazuren to say he was pleased with the inquisitiveness of the students and how hands-on they were.

"For the rest of the community, their highlight was engaging with the vendors," he added.

As students and community members walked into their gymnasiums they were greeted by vendor tables, lined up on both sides of the gym.

Mazuren and Iron both agree the vendor feedback was amazing.

"They said this was one of the best they've been to. One of the main congratulations from the vendors was about the community participation from each First Nation. We targeted each community with their own membership. The panel of individuals told their story of what it took for them to follow their career

goals," adds Mazuren.

For Iron, she said even though the vendors are very knowledgeable, it was still important the communities see and hear their own membership.

"This really connected with their own membership," she said. "It brings it home for them when someone from their community shares. There is that added bond, an added connection you could say. And I think this is what got the attention of the students and the adults in attendance at the Career Expos."

"The travelling MLTC Career Expo 2020 lowered the expense for community members by us coming into each First Nation," says Mazuren.

"They had a chance to meet the employers and hear first-hand from the vendors what they need to enter the workforce and train for a career."

Iron said this year's focus was on the trades.

"The idea was to promote work and education. For example, getting paid to go to school and of course to learn a trade. Becoming accred-

ited with Red Seal, and achieve the Journeyman title," Iron said.

"To cap off the tour," Mazuren continued. "There was a member from the Clearwater River Dene Nation who, at the last minute of the Career Expo, applied with one of the company vendors in attendance. By the end of the two-week tour, the vendor contacted us and said they offered that person a job. Successes like that make this MLTC Career Expo 2020 huge. Had the Career Expo not visited Clearwater, this connection might not have happened."

After all the anticipation of updating resumes, contacting companies in person and online, preparing for interviews, students and community members walked out of the Career Expo 2020 having had the opportunity to consider their next move.

The trades and apprenticeship commission anticipate that by 2026, there will be a 20 per cent retirement in all the trades.

"That opens up a huge door to access the trades and work towards a journeyman ticket," Mazuren said.

At the Flying Dust First Nation Career Expo Feb. 4, community members (l-r) Blake Derocher - security officer, Sheila Mirasty - health director and Delbert Aubichon - community safety officer, share their personal career story to those in attendance.



Self-investment must be a priority

“It’s getting harder to apply for social assistance.”

Those are the words of Rose Ann Iron, one of the co-ordinators of the Meadow Lake Tribal Council social development and pre-employment program.

Of the statistics Iron shared with the community members in attendance at each of the Career Expo 2020 stops was reminding them how little money a person gets while on social assistance compared to working for a living.

“A dollar-and-twenty cents an hour,” she said. “But, if you work as an electrician, you start at \$29 an hour.”

Calla Moore, also a co-ordinator who works with Iron, said the reason they are on the Career Expo 2020 is to plant a seed in our younger generation, starting from Grade 7.

“With the pre-employment program we bring in training. We have the Community reinvestment Fund (CRIF), we have Saskatchewan Assistant and Employment Training (SAET). We have helped with driver training, safety tickets, adult prep courses, work experience and job shadowing projects,” added Moore. “The focus this year is the employable singles. How it usually works is that a young person, an

employable single, would be referred to a case worker on the reserve and the case worker will work with this person on goal setting, and helping a young person reduce their barriers; to help them get to where they want to be. Additionally, some of the help offered includes resume writing.”

Moore added there has been a lot of success stories to date.

“There are some clients that didn’t even complete the programming with us because they were hired full-time by their job shadowing experience,” Moore added.

The office of social development and pre-employment want to send a message for the youth to stay in school, noting education is very important.

“At each of the communities we had panellists,” said Iron. “They spoke about their journey to their current employment and their challenges they faced along the way.”

One of those speakers was a Canoe Lake Cree First Nation man who spoke about being a single parent who studied to be an EMT and still made time to be a dad.

“I encourage social assistance clients to take advantage of the programs



Rose Ann Iron, one of MLTC’s coordinators in the social development and pre-employment program, shows attendees a graph showing other career salaries compared to social assistance payments.

that are out there,” said Iron. “They should always be doing something to build their skill level. Some youth still don’t have any idea what they want to study or have as a career which is fine. They at least had the opportunity by being at the Career Expo to learn from

others outside the community and to hear from their own community members’ journey to self-sufficiency.”

Moore states a lot of their clients have changed their lives and given themselves purpose.

“It’s so worthwhile to invest in yourself,” she says.

“Next year the economic development and social development and the pre-employment departments plan to take the Career Expo on the road again in 2021.

“There is more rapport with the communities and they were very welcoming,” noted Iron.



Above, students gather prior to the afternoon career expo presentation at the Clearwater River Dene Nation event Jan. 27. At right, Makwa Sahgaiehan students stop by the Meadow Lake Mechanical Pulp booth Feb. 5 to ask questions about a career there in the future.



Empowering youth to use their voice

On Feb. 6 in the Carpenter High School theatre, MLTC Education presented RED Talks, Empowering Our Voices, which is inspiring, informative and provocative to today's youth.

Chris Scribe and Colby Tootoosis of Think Indigenous say RED stands for revolutionary, education, decolonization.

"You won't find Think Indigenous sponsored by oil, gas or government," says Scribe. "When Colby and I speak with Indigenous youth we tell them we want you to be able to go on stage and just speak the truth and not be obligated to anyone. RED Talks gives them a platform. They can say whatever needs to be said without the worry of repercussions."

Tootoosis notes their format is usually for two days.

"On the first day no one really knows anyone, but on the second day there is more interaction between the youth," he says. "As well, on

the first day a young person who didn't even want to stand up or speak up is, on the second day, speaking loud enough to be heard at the other end of the auditorium."

The youth also become more comfortable when they are using their own words from their own languages. This also makes them more

relaxed around each other.

"We just have to listen to the youth – it's a glimpse into their world, but it's an amazing truth the youth tell," adds Scribe.

When presenting RED Talks, Tootoosis says the youth are trained to learn to speak from the heart.

"The talks turn out to be a how-to guide of how-to

support our communities," he says.

Scribe agrees.

"The coolest thing about working with the youth from the North, here is that a lot of the youth are still connected to their language – their ability to think Indigenous is already there."

Kristen Catarat, vice-principal at the Buffalo River Dene

Nation School sees nothing but good coming from presentations like this.

"I see the RED Talks as helping boost the confidence and self-esteem of our kids," she says.

At the end of the RED Talks, Scribe and Tootoosis challenged the MLTC youth to have a RED Talk in their own community when they return.



Chris Scribe of Think Indigenous rouses the youth in the crowd to cheer on their peers on stage.

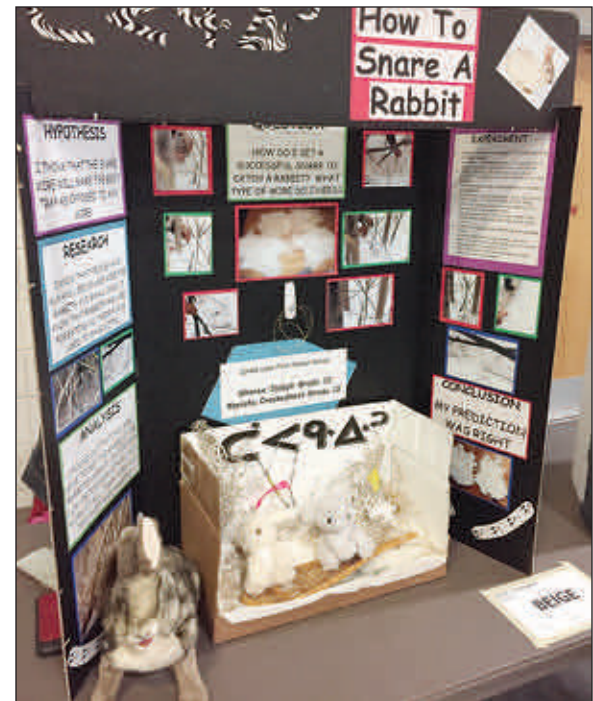


MLTC Science Fair 2020

Birch Narrows Dene Community School hosted this year's MLTC Science Fair Feb. 4 where students were encouraged to present in any language – English, Cree or Dene.

"There were two considerations in the judging – traditional, which meant how much input was there from an elder and what traditional knowledge does the display reveal; also, what kind of European science was discovered from the display," said Jan Vandermeer, MLTC Education's student learning and assessment co-ordinator, adding there were more entries this year for traditional based projects than in 2019.

When the dust settled, Clearwater River Dene Nation School was deemed the overall winner by amassing the most points in the competition. Below, superintendent of education, Celia Deschambeault, judges a science display.



MLTC NEWSLETTER

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