



Settling Into The Role of MLTC Tribal Chief

Our tribal council has elected a new Tribal Chief and has welcomed her with open arms into the political structure of MLTC.

On Friday, January 6, 2006 the Chiefs and five other delegates from each of the nine First Nations held a by-election to fill the recently vacated position of Tribal Chief. Candidates for this election included Harvey Chief of Island Lake First Nation and Helen Ben of Makwa Sahgaiehcan First Nation. The electoral officer was Vi Fiddler who ran the election observing all necessary protocols.

After the candidates delivered their opening speeches the polls opened with 43 out of the 45 eligible delegates proceeding to vote. When the final ballot ended at 3 p.m. it was declared that Helen Ben was the winner with 40 out of the 43 ballots cast. Helen Ben was swarmed with congratulations and took time to pose for pictures with the delegates and guests in attendance.

Her win marks the first time a woman has been elected into the Tribal Chief position in all of Saskatchewan. Tribal Chief Ben was quick to

note that it speaks greatly of the progressive nature of MLTC that she was chosen to represent them.

Tribal Chief Ben has since taken office and has been eager to contribute to both the political table and community-based initiatives. Prior to her win Helen Ben served a 10-



Tribal Chief Helen Ben

month term as the Chief of Makwa Sahgaiehcan First Nation. Before that she also served as the principal of their school. Her commitment to the youth and all First Nations citizens has been tried and tested making her a solid choice for Tribal Chief.

The Meadow Lake Tribal Council has become a new home to Helen Ben and the organization has

greeted her warmly. As Tribal Chief Ben settles into her role more each day MLTC looks forward to renewing their pace in the political arena of the province and Canada. Tribal Chief Ben hopes to shed new light on the opportunities for First Nations people in the north and provide them with room to grow as individuals and communities.

The political structure of MLTC has faced many changes in the past year. We have bid a fond farewell to long-standing Tribal Chief Richard Gladue who takes on new challenges

in his new position with the provincial government. In his wake he left a

thriving organization and an empty seat at the head of the political table. And on Helen Ben's election day he was quick to send words of congratulations to his successor.

Helen Ben has already distinguished herself as a leader and valuable community member. Her record of service speaks for itself and she has been given the chance to do so much more for so many First Nations people. As MLTC enters a new era of political leadership it will breathe new life into the services we offer. The contributions we make to the nine First Nations we serve will keep growing and their goals will always guide our vision.

In that spirit we welcome Helen Ben as the new MLTC Tribal Chief and we hope her administration strives to exceed all expectations.

Jeff McCallum
MLTC Communications

"Remember brothers and sisters: The greater part of our spirituality is embedded in our language. That is why it was attacked with such vigour."

-Bernie Francis,
First Nations Linguist

SECOND PAGE EDITORIALS

A Vanishing Library of Wisdom

There is an entire world of knowledge in the life experiences of Elders. In conversation their stories flow from distant memories with impressive attention to detail and very few omissions. The First Nations people of our region have had a unique set of experiences and yet these stories are so easily taken for granted. The tragedy though is that the same stories about growing up in the region are being lost every time an Elder leaves us. As we say our goodbyes and our prayers we are also bidding farewell to the best record of times past.

The second tragedy here is that Elders still with us are seldom recognized as living repositories of the land's history. Our heritage is being abandoned and forgotten. It is devastating when such a wealth of knowledge escapes to obscurity when it could be resurrected over a simple cup of tea. But the fact remains that First Nations people, whether a youth or an adult, are helplessly ignoring the traditional wisdom available to them.

The loss has been most terrible in recent years.

While a community mourns these losses as deeply as the family stricken with them, there is still hope in joyful memories as long as the departed have left their life experiences behind in stories.

To ask a First Nations family if they are familiar



Elder Baptiste Martell

with the sights and smells of an Elder's home is to ask if they remember breathing. It is an inherent experience that many do take for granted and yet some appreciate for all the human interest it provides. A grandparent's house is a home, a playground, a nursery, a sanctuary, and most importantly, a library. The atmosphere of culture and tradition is so commonplace in an Elder's home that it cannot be readily hidden behind new

appliances and a renovated décor. The Elders themselves give life to their homes with memories as clear as the pictures they keep throughout the house.

In many cases an Elder's home is as old-fashioned as those living in it. And why shouldn't it be. Elders live as simply now as they did when they were growing up. But while vitality has left many of their bodies frail, the life they have lived has remained vibrant in their memories.

There is currently a book in development of Elders stories. This beautiful text is rich and alive with the same stories you hear in an Elder's home and will have 1500 copies printed off for release to the public. MLTC has suggested that the release date for the book will be the late fall or early winter of 2006. It is a wonderful project and the people of the MLFNs should be excited to see it.

The wisdom and experience of a long life is an impressive asset to leadership. Elders are incorporated into every aspect of First Nations culture and rightly so. The prosperity of now exists solely because of their hard

work and sacrifice. To lose sight of that is to rob future generations of its value. Too many Elders have left us and they have taken their many soulful experiences with them.

Jeff McCallum,
MLTC Communications

Political Seasons Of Change

In the last year we have seen many politicians in our region come and go. Most notably we have seen two changes in the tribal leadership and a range of changes in the Chiefs and Councils of the nine First Nations.

As always we wish our politicians continued success and the wisdom to bring prosperity to everyone. And even with new leaders settling into their roles politics shows no sign of slowing.

Governance discussions at the community and Tribal Council levels are growing. There is an ever-expanding awareness of what First Nations Governance means and we hope that trend continues.

With the year almost half over we face the changes in power that will have impacts across the region. And as always we shall address the future knowing that we have the greatest part in determining our own path.

THE CORPORATE REPORT

Forestry Not Out Of The Woods Yet

The forestry industry in northern Saskatchewan is in crisis. Much of the crisis is caused by problems in the pulp industry which has seen the closure of the Weyerhaeuser pulp and paper mills in Prince Albert and the pulp mill in Meadow Lake being placed into bankruptcy protection. The financial health of NorSask Forest Products, the sawmill owned 100% by the Meadow Lake First Nations (MLFNs), is closely tied in with these two pulp mills.

From 1988 to 1998, we owned 40% of NorSask and it has been a profitable venture for us ever since. Since 1998, we bought out the other shareholders and we now own 100% of the mill. We have used profits from the mill to pay down



bank debt associated with the purchase of the mill, build up equity, and make distributions to the owners – the Meadow Lake First Nations (MLFNs).

NorSask needs a healthy forest industry in Saskatchewan to continue to survive and prosper. With the closure of the Weyerhaeuser pulp mill, NorSask no longer has an outlet for our softwood

chips. As a result, we lose the revenue from the sale of the chips and the trucking jobs for hauling them to Prince Albert.

Having a healthy hardwood user in Meadow Lake is also important for NorSask. Given that our forest is a mixed wood forest made up of both hardwood and softwood, we need both species to be harvested in order to help keep our costs down. The Millar Western Pulp Mill has been good for NorSask and we are concerned that their financial viability is in question. If they are unable to remain in business, we need a new hardwood project to take its place.

The pulp industry in North America is having difficulty competing with lower cost producers in the southern hemisphere. The market in our region has a different economic climate resulting in a set of unique financial challenges.

NorSask employs approximately 120 people in the mill and the central office. MLTC Northern Trucking employs 12 truck

drivers. Mistik Management, the forest manager, harvests fibre, consults with local communities, and re-forests the land base. Mistik has approximately 300 full time equivalent positions. The forestry industry is a significant employer for the MLFNs and for the whole region. Over 95% of Mistik's work is done by local contractors with over 70% of them being aboriginal. The forest industry contributes significantly to the regional economy.

So, while problems abound, we are also actively looking for solutions. On the wood chip issue, we are in the process of negotiating terms with a new customer and we hope to see our wood chips moving in the next short while. The Provincial Government is in the process of trying to sell the pulp mill in Meadow Lake. We are active with the Province as it goes through the sales process. As the pulp mill is our partner in Mistik, we want to make sure that we are compatible with any new user. We understand that Weyerhaeuser is actively trying to sell the pulp mill in PA.

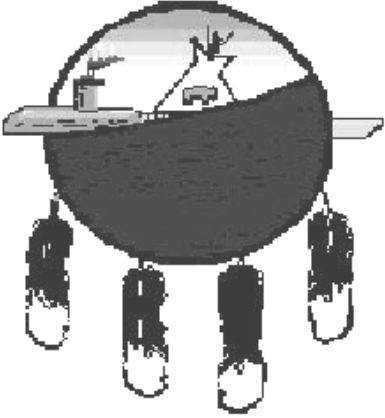
NorSask is a well managed sawmill and because of its high efficiencies and low costs, it is in a strong position to survive in a tough market and to be there when the good times return.

Vern Bachiu,
Director of Policy & Programs, MLTC



FOCUSED ON THE COMMUNITIES

The Waterhen Lake First Nation



Powwows and a Sundance. The elders and other members of Waterhen Lake are also greatly involved in sweat lodges and other spiritual ceremonies.

On the business front, the Waterhen Lake First Nation has been managing its forestry resources carefully due to the unstable forestry industry. The long-standing partnership efforts with NorSask Forest Products have seen Waterhen Lake make significant efforts to sustain harvesting and logging contracts.

Beyond the forestry sector, Waterhen Lake hopes to expand on the development of its abundant land base with potential resource harvesting activities. Established business operations also thrived including the bison ranch, community store, M&N Resort, trucking contracts, cattle operations and ecotourism guiding. The focus of economic development has been on the creation of jobs for

The Waterhen Lake First Nation has spent the last few years bringing beneficial opportunities to its membership of approximately 1600 people. There was renewed interest in the growth of capital projects, cultural activities and the holistic healing initiatives of health and social programs. Under Chief Sidney Fiddler's administration, the community has been devoted to sustaining beneficial business pursuits and community health and wellness.

There were growing business pursuits and renewed efforts to harvest natural resources. Band-funded cultural programs also took place including



band members and the income of revenues for band projects.

The challenges facing Waterhen Lake include band member employment rates and pressure to attain sufficient funding for vital sectors of community development. Chief and Council struggle to address these community needs while planning for the future.

Waterhen Lake also continued discussions to assume control of traditional lands. There have been several meetings with the provincial and federal governments to reinforce control of Waterhen Lake's hunting and fishing rights.

Waterhen Lake First Nation continues to address the health and social concerns of band members. An example would be the Residential School Survivor Program, which takes band members who

experienced the residential school system and involves them in workshops geared towards holistic healing, family unit dysfunction, power and control issues and awareness of associated behaviors.

Services are delivered in other health and social programs such as nursing, home care, addictions, Child and Family Services, childcare, Head Start and many others.

As the population of Waterhen Lake grows, so does its commitment to empower band members. New opportunities are sought and established ventures continue to expand. Waterhen Lake's efforts have resulted in a successful level of growth and development for the entire population. That spirit of strength and progress will continue for many generations to come.



IN THE INTERESTS OF HEALTH

Health Summit Promotes Positive Change

Back in October of 2005 the MLTC Health & Social Development Authority hosted a Health Summit in Saskatoon titled "Renewing Our Commitment To Health". The conference, which ran from October 5 - 7, brought in several dignitaries and speakers from the nine First Nations and all levels of First Nations healthcare. The Summit marked the largest annual gathering of Meadow Lake First Nations and MLTC healthcare administrators and workers of this scale.

Among the attendees were several Health & Social Development employees and members from each of the nine First Nations including youth, healthcare workers, health administrators and leaders. The Summit hosted about 250 people for three days of workshops, guest speakers, special presentations, breakout groups and round table discussions on community health directives.

The Summit proved to be an invaluable forum for the exchange of ideas between frontline health workers and MLTC's second level support services. Doris Woods, Health Director for the Buffalo River Dene Nation, said, "What I would like to bring home with me is the continuing support from the 2nd level services and capacity building for health staff. When I look at the health system from 13



years ago, there has been major improvement. The whole environment has changed to where people are feeling satisfied due to the availability of resources at the community level although people still need

to build trust and take advantage of these resources."

It was in the early 90s that health directors from the nine communities and their tribal council developed a strategy to provide a full range of professional healthcare services to every member of the Meadow Lake First Nations. The Summit revisited those goals and strategies through direct consultation between

MLTC's healthcare employees and the First Nations they deliver services to.

The Summit's focus changed daily with the first theme being "Values Drive Our Model" in reference to the traditional First Nations model of health (spiritual, emotional, mental and physical). The theme for the next day was "From Walkman to MP3: The



Evolution of Youth" while the final day's theme was "Tools For Moving Ahead".

Director of Health & Social Development, Marie McCallum, said "the Summit provided information regarding our progress [and] new strategies in health. It was an opportunity to develop a health plan that will carry us forward over the next decade."

With healthcare professionals from all over the north attending, many of them brought their foremost concerns to the table. Extensive planning prior to the Summit gave high hopes for its success and the positive changes that have emerged will only continue with time. By focusing on open communication MLTC is anxious to see where healthcare services will take First Nations people not only in 2006 but also for many years to come.



A WORLD OF EDUCATION

"Think Ahead"

(From the Summer Edition of the Education Newsletter)

Chief Ahtakahkoop at the time of the Treaties said, "Let us not think of ourselves, but our children's children." The Chief was speaking of how the people would attempt to survive into the future and how education would help them achieve this goal. Education can be a powerful tool of transformation and survival. Prior to the European invasion, each Indian group had its own traditional forms of education. Some of these educational processes were quite structured such as vision quests and other ceremonies, ritualized stories, oral histories, and formal instruction. Others were more informal processes characterized by

observation and imitation of daily activities geared toward teaching children the knowledge, skills, and values necessary for survival in a subsistence economy organized around kinship relations. We all



know how our ancestors saw their world change before their eyes, it was, as was once said in an Elder's invocation at a Powwow, "a dark cloud for the Indian peoples of Canada." Each year our graduates move on to develop a new, better collective Indian Identity. Their

participation in a culturally modern technological society depends upon the maintenance of bonds to traditional and contemporary Indian education and culture. The forces and experiences of our ancestors' lives should also remind us to think ahead.

THE MLTC NEWSLETTER INVITES YOU TO HAVE A SAY

As we begin this project we hope that the communities will help us make it a valuable and informative resource. We welcome you to provide us with the issues and topics that matter most to you.

Also, if you have stories and pictures to share or if you want to recognize the special achievements of someone in your community then please let us know. Submit your work to us (with your name and contact info) and we will do our best to get it into the next issue of the Northwest Quarterly newsletter. Contact us by:

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YOUTHFUL MATTERS

MLTC Competes at the 2006 Winter Games

The athletes and organizers across the nine communities were eagerly awaiting the 2006 Saskatchewan First Nations Winter Games. This year The Gordon First Nation hosted the event in Regina from April 16 to 21.

The Gordon First Nation was hard at work preparing for the thousands of guests that the Winter Games brings in. Among those numbers were the athletes, coaches, chaperones and of course many families and friends. And the MLTC team was all geared up for another round of exciting competition. Despite their best efforts the team returned home from the Games with a sixth-place finish. It was a sign that the young First Nations athletes from across the province have stepped up their game. Each team from across the province fought hard for points throughout the week but at the end of it all the Saskatoon Tribal

Council emerged victorious.

At the MLTC level the Sports and Youth Coordinator, Terrence Sylvestre had his hands full trying to get the MLTC athletes prepared for competition. Planning for the Games only begins with the countless details like travel, meals, training, accommodations, tryouts, chaperones, and uniforms. The whole process takes tons of effort and volunteer work.



While the planning stage is hectic at the best of times many of the guests are actually more interested in the whole experience more so than the sports. The Winter Games brings friends from across the province together for a few days of sports and fun and fellowship. For many of the guests and visitors the Winter Games are more about celebrating First Nations culture and community spirit rather than strict competition.

In terms of the youth who gathered in Regina, they came for the friendships made at the Winter Games. When it comes to sports of any kind, one of the reasons to actively participate is to meet new people and share in common challenges.

Families get to visit for a handful of days and strangers can become friends in no time. Of all the Winter Games traditions, communication and socialization between

families is one of the most sacred and time-honoured.

Even with all the fun and friendships of the Winter Games, the heart of the event was the excitement of competition. Athletes strived to perform at their best in the hopes of bringing home a medal to their First Nations. On a more personal level, athletes also worked hard to achieve their own goals of self-improvement.

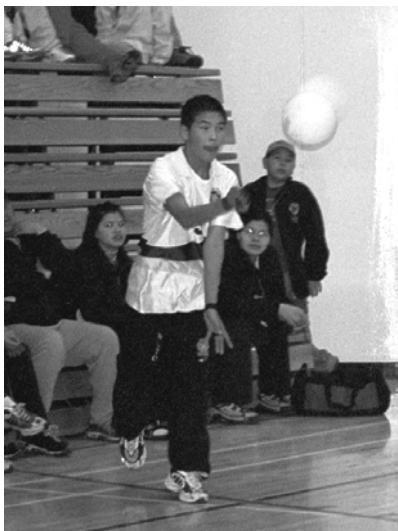
There is so much pride in making it to the large-scale of the Winter Games that

has become so important for young people as they



mature into adults. The Winter Games have not only created better athletes, but they have built character and inspired youth to engage in healthy activity. Support for the Winter Games continues to thrive because of this fact and the teams across the province will all be ready for next time. MLTC's team realizes they now have something more to prove.

The organizations and governments that are involved recognize that each Winter Games are a celebration of First Nations youth, unity and culture. In the spirit of the Games, MLTC congratulates STC on their new title and we also say good work to the organizers and sponsors who make the Games possible. Finally, we offer our most sincere gratitude to our athletes, coaches, supporters, chaperones and parents. Each of you have already made your home communities proud. Enjoy that feeling every bit as much as you deserve.



The End Of An Era

A Tribute To The Leadership of Tribal Chief Richard Gladue

On December 16, 2005 Richard Gladue addressed the leaders and employees of the Meadow Lake Tribal Council as their Tribal Chief for the last time. For many it marked the end of an impeccable career and for others it was a fond farewell to a great leader.

While Richard Gladue may have resigned as the Tribal Chief of MLTC, he is far from leaving the arena of First Nations affairs. His departure is in response to an opening at the provincial government where Richard will continue to work hard as the Assistant Deputy Minister (ADM) for Saskatchewan First Nation and Métis Relations.

Richard Gladue has taken on a variety of roles in his career. But in all of those capacities he has

distinguished himself as a leader deserving of all the respect therein.

Richard Gladue became the Tribal Chief of the Meadow Lake Tribal Council in October of 1994 succeeding MLTC's very first Tribal Chief, Percy Derocher. Since that time Richard has taken the plight of First Nations communities to heart and has advocated for their inherent rights and freedoms for years.

As a tribal chief, Richard was also very focused on the Health and Social Development sector. He was chair of their board and was instrumental in the creation of the healthcare agreements and corresponding services the nine First Nations now enjoy.

As the Meadow Lake Tribal Council began to grow and expand beyond its original goals the Chiefs always valued the opinions of the tribal leadership. Both the tribal chief and the vice-chiefs have served the tribal council's political interests with great integrity



and responsibility. In the political arena, Richard Gladue was a powerful voice for negotiations on Self-Government. His belief in the potential of First Nations Governance and leadership was always above average. That faith is also what made MLTC such a strong economic player in the region.

During Tribal Chief Gladue's administration the tribal council has been able to sustain a growing portfolio of businesses and other ventures. MLTC has established itself as a great supporter of the forestry industry. Responsible resource management and sound financial management has seen the corporate interests of MLTC prosper. Our successes have become recognized nationally and even internationally with the development of the Nicaraguan

Contigo Project. It speaks volumes about the universality of First Nations development that our organizational structure can be applied to First Nations in other parts of the world. Richard always believed that unity was important in the development of First Nations communities. The tribal council is a constant reminder of what can be accomplished by combining the strengths of individual First Nations.

Many people believe that a great part of an organization's strength is in its leadership. And while a good leader can inspire people to put their faith in them, only a great leader can inspire people to put that same faith in themselves. Richard Gladue was one of those leaders. For that reason and many more, he will be missed.

