

Meadow Lake First Nations Governance



**Our Way,
Our Vision,
Our Future**

Introduction to the Graphic Identifier for the Meadow Lake First Nations

We are pleased to introduce the new Meadow Lake First Nations Governance logo. From time immemorial, First Nations have utilized the age-old skill of mnemonics (pronounced ni-'mān-iks). This logo brings a story from our memories.

It is full of meaning starting with the sunrise. The sunrise brings a new day. This new day provides a chance to improve on the day before. Along with the new day come new challenges. These challenges can be overcome by our people as a whole.

The sun rays each represent our bands. In the middle is a picture of a family in their birch bark canoe. Both the Cree and Dene shared resources, technologies, sciences, medicines, and governance to maintain peace, friendship and partnerships. The waters, trees and land represent the wealth of our resources and that we must continue to adapt in order to prosper and flourish on our lands.



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Message from Tribal Chief Helen Ben

Tansi, it is great to be able to pass on a message from the Office of the Tribal Chief. I think that open communication is one of the best means of keeping our Tribal Members informed about the direction that we are going as a Tribal Council.

There has been years of work dedicated to the Self-government file. The staff within the Self-government department have been busy negotiating and preparing strategy as well as documents required to assist in the road to implementing self-government in its actuality.

I am very pleased to hear that more information will be presented in different formats to the members of the nine First Nations. I feel that we are at a crucial time of negotiations and that the work done thus far will be up for ratification.

In order to make an informed decision, one must have full or as complete of understanding as possible. Self-government is an important topic and must be considered with full knowledge of the implications.

I urge all members to read and debate the issue as much as possible. The office of Self-government will provide the information in different formats as to better enable full understanding.

Mahsi cho and thank you.
Masi Chogh



Round 1 of Community Consultations Finished



**Garry Laboucan in Island Lake First Nation
presenting the Governance Agreement**

Round One of community consultations have been completed with visits to each of the Meadow Lake First Nations (MLFNs) by the main table negotiators and the Main Office of MLFNs Governance. The team visited the communities to present an overview of the Governance Agreement. The negotiation team members are Lead Negotiator, Irma Murdock; Director of Governance, Isidore Campbell; Legal Council Jerome Slavik; and from the Governance Office, Communications and Consultations Coordinator, Kevin Lewis.

The goal of Community Consultations is to inform First Nation members about the Governance Agreement and to receive feedback about community concerns. The negotiation team agreed to provide more information as requested by First Nation members that participated in the question and answer period.

The Elders raised concerns such as the need to create a healthy community by healing and working together and encouraged a continued effort to work towards self-determination. The need to continue on this path was highlighted by a surprise visit from teachers and students from various schools. Their presence illuminated the importance of how negotiation issues will affect future generations.

One of the key components for successful participation by First Nation members at the grassroots level and understanding the negotiation process was the Cree and Dene translations of the Governance Agreement conducted by team members.

Mr. Lewis and Mr. Campbell respectively provided Cree and Dene language translations for the agreement, the overview as well as the question and answer period. Meadow Lake First Nation members commented that they found the meetings both informative and interesting. Team members were rewarded for their efforts by the increased interest and participation in the negotiation process and the appreciation expressed by First Nation members that they were provided with the opportunity to communicate in their first language. This type of consultation format creates mutual respect and must be continued to ensure open channels of communications. There were a few people who



Isidore Campbell in Birch Narrows during Q's and A's

were apprehensive, but afterwards a deeper appreciation and understanding for the negotiating efforts was voiced by the people in each of these communities.

The First Nation members who were present were assured that the meeting was the first of many more visits by the Governance team. They wanted to know the details of Self-government and are expecting change for the better. It was generally felt that self-governance offers more options for improving the economics and therefore the quality of life on First Nations. All communities expressed further interest in learning more about the process and looked forward to the next informational sessions. Team members reported an average of 40 people attended the meetings in each community.



Island Lake First Nation presentation of the Governance Agreement



Community Coordinator Meetings and Updates

The eight First Nations within the Meadow Lake Tribal Council each have a Community Coordinator who works to create awareness of the negotiations and governance issues. One component of their duties is to establish a governance committee known as a Constitution Development Committee.

The Committee will then work towards developing a community constitution. Some of the Committees have held community information sessions and consultations. A number of concerns raised by the community consultations pertain to:

- government structure;
- lands;
- passing laws;
- delegation of law-making power;
- choosing leaders;
- accountability; and
- citizenship and general items.

The first meeting of the New Year held in Meadow Lake began with introductions and updates from each of the Community Coordinators. The eight coordinators gave positive reports about their community. Some reported difficulties with meeting while others had more progress due to community involvement.



Coordinator's Meeting:
Each of the MLFN has a communication coordinator.

There are currently three positions that are in the governance section of the Meadow Lake Tribal Council office, which was previously known as the Governance Secretariat. Both Kevin Lewis and Jeff McCullam recently joined the Meadow Lake Tribal Council. They have been introduced to the coordinators as their new Communications and Consultations Team on Governance. The other position is held by Director of Governance, Isidore Campbell.

Coordinators were given surveys so that their communities could participate in the MLTC political renewal process. The main objective of the survey was the future direction of the Meadow Lake Tribal Council.

The survey results gathered had direct input into the future direction of the Meadow Lake Tribal Council. QED consultant Doug Elliot, whose firm specializes in surveys and statistical analysis, presented the survey results at the March General Assembly in Saskatoon.

The coordinators were given an introduction to the new plans for 2006-2007. This was a new direction which included a new logo and the new Open House method of community consultation with a communications strategy that will include input from First Nation members. The coordinators approved the new strategy.

The coordinators update their community on further constitutional work and development through radio shows, school visits, informational meetings, and continued training initiatives such as Board Room training.

A few Meadow Lake First Nation members traveled to the Banff Institute of Leadership to attend a training session on "Self-Government and Good Governance". The Coordinator Reports, throughout the year, are instrumental in keeping the negotiating team informed on committee activities.



Brenda, Gloria, Ruth listening to updates.

History of Negotiations

The Meadow Lake Tribal Council (MLTC) began in 1981 when the First Nations of the Meadow Lake District united to form the Meadow Lake District Chiefs Joint Venture. Co-operation between the region's First Nations strengthened and in 1986 the Meadow Lake District Chiefs became officially known as the Meadow Lake Tribal Council. The eight First Nations that are currently involved in the Governance Agreement are:

- Birch Narrows Dene Nation
- Canoe Lake Cree First Nation
- Clearwater River Dene Nation
- English River First Nation
- Flying Dust First Nation
- Island Lake First Nation
- Makwa Sahgaiehcan First Nation
- Waterhen Lake First Nation

Today MLTC is striving even further to promote positive growth for the nine Meadow Lake First Nations (MLFNs). MLFNs may pass laws in areas like Education, Justice, Technical Programming,

and Business Development at their own pace and on their own time frame.

The health sector of MLTC has been supporting First Nations Health and Wellness programs from the beginning. Today these programs provide valuable, widespread healthcare services to all communities on a regular basis. MLTC is forever committed to the health of its member First Nations.

The Meadow Lake Tribal Council has grown from humble beginnings into a major developer of the nine member communities. As an advocate for First Nations issues, MLTC has given a louder voice to the Meadow Lake First Nations. The main goal has always been to create Health, Community Wealth and Good Governance for the communities that are represented in northwest Saskatchewan. That vision is as strong today as it has ever been.



Status of Negotiations on the Governance Agreement

Meadow Lake First Nations negotiation team have been meeting with the Federal and Provincial teams to continue Governance negotiations. The negotiating parties alternate hosting the meetings at different locations. Team members include lead negotiators, lawyers and technicians working to best represent the interests of their clients.

Members of the Meadow Lake First Nations Elder Council hold pipe ceremonies each morning to open the proceedings adding historical and cultural significance to the negotiation process.

First Day proceedings usually start with the delivery of the agendas which are set out ahead of time to allow the parties to prepare for discussions. The topics warrant lengthy discussions and debates but each team strives to complete the agenda in a timely fashion. The teams also break several times during the negotiations to discuss issues in private.

When all parties are in agreement they move on to the next section, chapter or subsection. When a problem or concern arises, each team may break, hold or flag the item for future negotiations or internal reviews. This process allows words to be deleted, sentences to be questioned and sections to be deleted or added. Chiefs assist in the process through the Chief's Advisory Board as well as being present at the main table.

When all the delegates arrive, negotiations begin where they had left off the previous day. A number of issues are discussed throughout this process. A historical moment came for both the Canoe Lake



Negotiations in Regina listening to Presentation.

Cree First Nation and the MLFNs, where they hosted the main table negotiations in their community for the first time. This signaled the first of many for the MLFNs.

The Meadow Lake First Nation negotiating team consisted of, Lead Negotiator, Irma Murdock; Director of Governance, Isidore Campbell; and Legal Counsel Jerome Slavik.



Lead Negotiator Irma Murdock and Director Isidore Campbell in Canoe Lake.

Talks continue throughout the usual three-day meeting covering a number of items with differing priorities on the daily agendas. The Governance Agreement is currently on Draft #13. The goal is to have lands and resources with all interests taken into account. It is important that Economic Development Initiatives are outlined and understood by everyone.

Another example is the Negotiation Table in Meadow Lake on March 8 – 10 where MLFN representatives discussed Health Provisions within the Governance Agreement. It was an opportunity to have representatives travel to Meadow Lake to witness First Nation history in the making.

Saskatchewan representatives discussed Amendments to sections in Child and Family Services. The days were also filled with frustrations, compromise and arguments during the negotiations on Traditional Territories and Citizenship. The Tripartite Governance Agreement was also in its second draft.

In closing the Elders spoke in Cree taking advantage of an opportunity to voice their opinions on the negotiations. They thanked everyone for inviting them for consultations and expressed interest in continued participation.



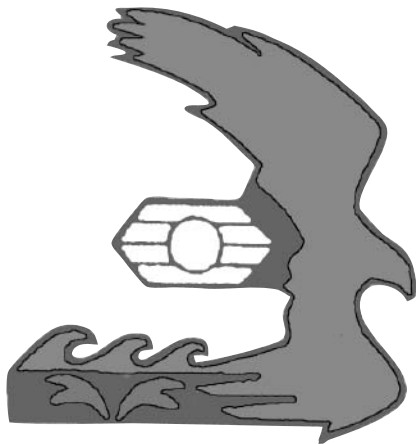
Negotiations in Regina listening to Presentation.



DENE sułíné NÉNé - Dene Translation of Traditional Territory
kayātī-pimācihōwākiy-askiy ēkwa ē-tāhwin - Cree Translation of Traditional Territory

Constitutional Development Committee News

The most important issue in this line of work is to get the communities to accept their constitutions and begin to take ownership of it. This was always the plan and today this resolve is beginning to take shape.



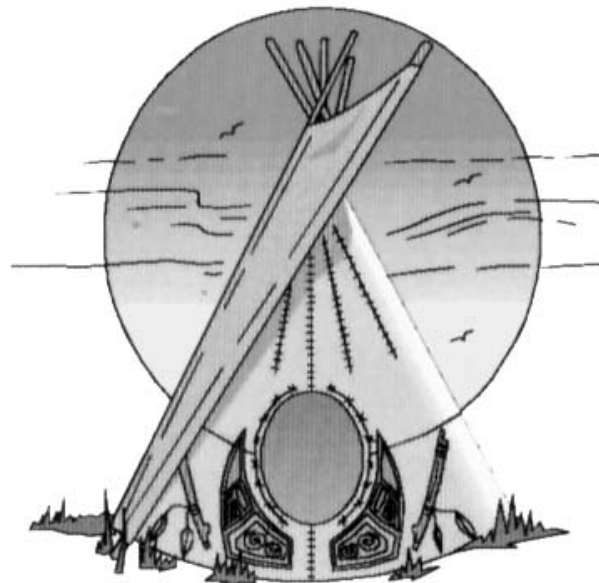
The English River First Nation Constitution Development Committee held a meeting in early January to discuss issues relevant to their community. Committee members were joined by a councillor and an Elder at the meeting. Agenda topics included:

- Community Communications;
- The Governance Agreement;
- Draft #3 of the English River Constitution;
- Referendum Strategies;
- Youth Involvement; and
- Constitutions.

The Committee planned to utilize posters and the local radio station as communication strategies to generate interest and inform their community of the committee's efforts.

Constitution Development Involves the Community

The Flying Dust First Nation Constitution Development Committee invited Director of Governance Isidore Campbell and Communications and Consultations Coordinator Kevin Lewis to give an overview of the Governance Agreement Draft #12 in early



February. Legal Counsel Trina Kondro was on hand to answer any questions put forward by the Constitution Development Committee. Ms. Kondro is a Solicitor with the Edmonton based law firm of Akroyd, Piasta Roth & Day, LLP. Ms. Kondro has been assisting Meadow Lake First Nations in developing their constitutions.

The evening meeting enabled many to attend after work and was attended by community members and Elders. This could be another option for communities when developing community interests.

One of the concerns raised regarded gaining First Nation jurisdiction over young offenders under *The Corrections and Rehabilitation Act*. More information was requested on fiscal relationship and financial arrangements related to the rising costs of expected population growth, Implementation Plans and Own Source Revenue were also discussed in detail. Taxation jurisdiction focused discussion on economic developments and opportunities.

These are two examples of the work being done in our communities and issues under discussion. Future newsletters will focus on other community initiatives.



Elders Advisory Committee News

District Elders Council Meeting - Hosts Kainai Elders

The District Elders Council of the Meadow Lake First Nations came to the Meadow Lake Tribal Council for a two-day workshop on January 30 – 31, 2006. The Elders opened each day with a pipe ceremony. There were two elders representing each of the nine bands.

Day One began with an overview of the Governance Agreement in both the Cree and Dene languages followed by a question and answer period. On Day Two, Kainai Elders were invited to present and highlight how their efforts with the Kainai Legislative Initiative Elder Council have influenced the steps to educate and ratify their agreements with the Canadian Government and the Province of Alberta.

Elder Andy Black Water spoke on how Elders continue to play a prominent role in our First Nation societies. He said, "There is no such thing as retirement for us. As we get older and gain experience, we advance in status and we are in more demand by our people. We need to work with our minds and with our hearts. Elders are in a position of prediction and projection. We have a job to do and we will do that job. We must continue this path in order to survive."

Elder Rosie Day Rider added that the involvement of the Elders includes taking care of ourselves as individuals. Elder Day Rider shared remedies for

common sicknesses with medicine made from plants. She stated, "We need to begin to learn how to take care of ourselves and take full responsibility for our actions and our future."

The presence of the Kainai Elders was powerful and encouraging. Our own Elders recalled it was a practice of the past when Elders of other nations would travel to share ideas, remedies and medicines. We are beginning to see activities of our past resurface, which is on the right path to self-determination.

In the afternoon, First Nation Wellness Coordinator, Jan Cyr, of First Nation University of Canada presented a workshop dealing with colonial behaviour and First Nations. Ms. Cyr's presentation followed the history of colonization to the present day. The presentation was very informative on issues such as the negative affects of alcohol. The presentation outlined how feelings of inadequacy disappear when we begin to introduce our own structured governments and institutions.

The two-day workshop was a success with the Elders giving positive comments. The Kainai Elders felt welcomed and had a wonderful time sharing their experiences with the Meadow Lake First Nations Elders. It was hard to see the Elders leave the Meadow Lake Tribal Council building to return home because of the warmth they shared with their presence.

Jan Cyr is a First Nations Wellness Coordinator, for the First Nations University of Canada, at the Regina Campus. Jan provides personal support services to all staff and students. This includes, referral services to various community agencies, facilitating workshops that relate to wellness and increasing self-esteem.



Elder Rosie Day Rider and Elder Andy Black Water



Jan Cyr

Ms. Cyr was invited by the Meadow Lake Tribal Council to present a workshop, titled "Lateral Violence", which talks about why our communities are the way they are, based on Colonialism and Residential Schools. It's facilitated in a way that is not looked at in blame or anger, but in terms of how to re-empower ourselves. If we can re-empower ourselves first, then we can help our families, then our communities.

Please inform any of your family members or relatives who are attending any of our campuses in Regina, Prince Albert, and Saskatoon, that they can make an appointment to meet with Ms. Cyr if they need some support during their time at our University.

Elders' Meeting in Island Lake

On March 11, 2006, Coordinator Dexter Crookedneck invited Kevin Lewis out to meet with the Elders of Island Lake First Nation. There were ten local Elders present and the entire meeting was



presented in Cree. Concerns of poverty were raised and that ways of getting our people into a better state need to be researched and developed.

Traditional ways are very important to the Elders and these teachings need to be taught to First Nations members of all ages. The Elders started to brainstorm ideas to give direction to the people that were working in these areas such as the Justice worker and the Self-government workers. They also emphasized that the leadership need to also give this process serious consideration.

Traditional Territories was also discussed and it was interesting to see that the Elders present reminded each other of areas people hunted, trapped, picked berries, fished and so on. Sacred sites were also a concern and that there were many in the Bronson Forest that people are aware of. The Elders really felt a sense of belonging due to the fact that the Coordinator and Justice Worker were seeking them for advice and direction. This was said to be good practice.



Future Initiatives: Open House Style Community Consultations Coming

Meadow Lake First Nation representatives including Isidore Campbell and Kevin Lewis attended an Open House in late December on the Blood Tribe First Nation located near the community of Standoff in southern Alberta. The purpose of the Open House was to provide members of the Blood Tribe First Nation with information on the Blood Tribe Governance Agreement.

Tribal representatives were on hand to explain developments in the negotiations with the Canadian Government and the Province of Alberta with respect to regaining jurisdiction over child and family matters. The Kainai Legislation Initiative is focused on research, development and preparation for the implementation of their Final Agreement.

They had information displays for those interested in the process. The presentations



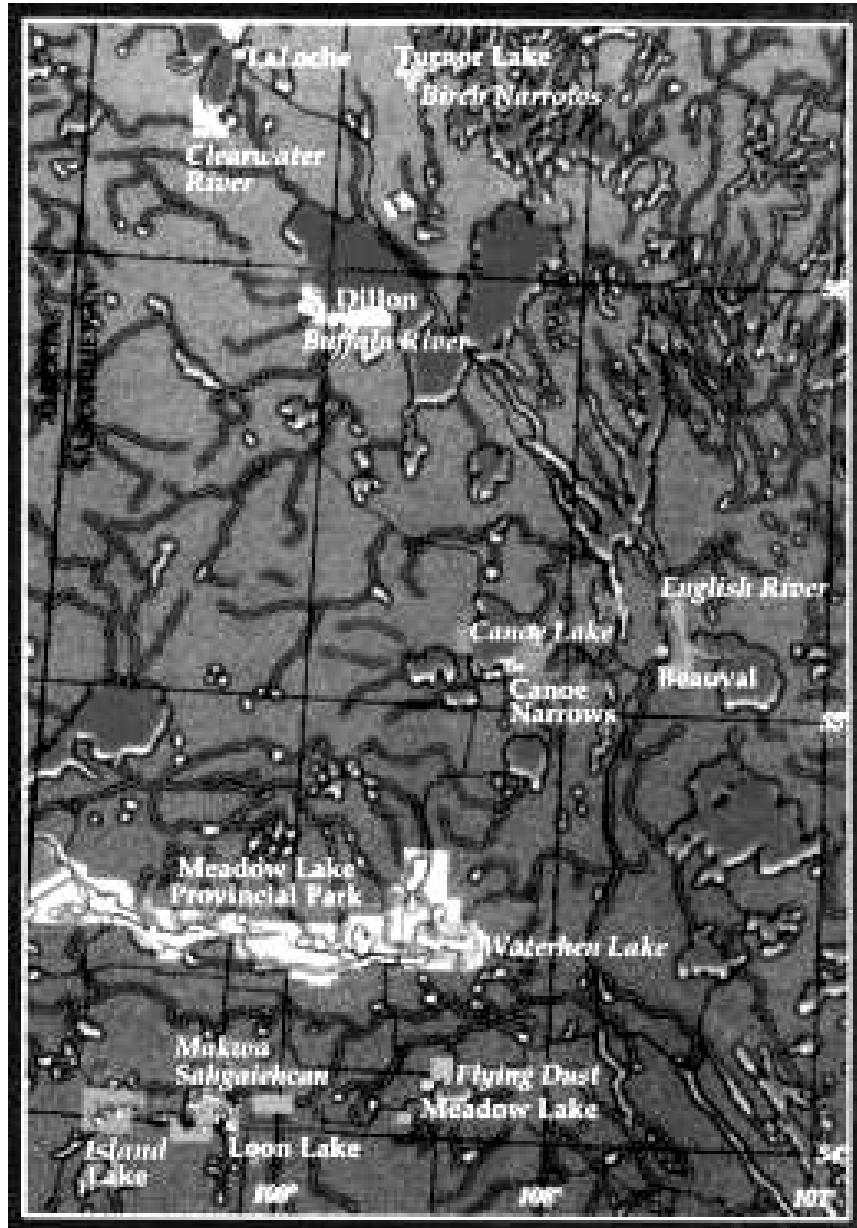
began with the traditional welcome of the Elders. Presentations were given by lead negotiators, technicians and Elders speaking about the relevant issues. The Kainai Legislation Initiative has developed effective consultation strategies that the Meadow Lake Tribal Council Governance team hopes to adopt.



Meadow Lake First Nations is developing an Open House concept based on a successful model used by the Kainai Legislative Initiative for the purpose of informing First Nation members about the governance process and issues. The straight forward style delivers information at the grassroots level. First Nation members can visit at informational tables set up at an Open House where they can ask questions or voice their concerns about governance negotiations or other topics.

A documentary is also being developed in both the Cree and Dene languages to aid in the process of distributing information to clarify concerns on related issues.

MLFN Bands



MLFN Bands in North Western Saskatchewan

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