Wildfire season starts early

The first evacuation of a Meadow Lake First Nation occurred on Tuesday, May 15, as the residents of Waterhen Lake First Nation had to leave their community due to the Tuff Wildfire. The residents without special needs starting returning on May 18 and 19. Special needs residents will return later in the week.

The mandatory evacuation of approximately 800 residents was necessary due to the aggressive nature of the wildfire, according to Gerry Merasty, Meadow Lake Tribal Council’s Emergency Response Plan Coordinator. “About 50 frontline workers were left in the community, persons who can’t leave due to the nature of their jobs such as security personnel. This was a general evacuation, so everyone had to leave the community,” said Mr. Merasty. On Monday, more than 50 residents had left the community due to health reasons.

The evacuated residents of Waterhen Lake First Nation (WLFN) were first bused to the Flying Dust First Nation using school buses driven by drivers of the Northwest School Division. At Flying Dust First Nation, the residents were initially housed at the community hall known locally as the gym. At the gym, the WLFN members were met by staff of the Meadow Lake Tribal Council (MLTC), the Red Cross and volunteers from the city of Meadow Lake. The individuals who met the members answered their questions and registered each evacuee. Then the evacuees were coached to Saskatchewan and were housed at the Henk Ruys Soccer Centre. “Once at the centre, MLTC staff would further discuss the needs of the evacuees,” said Mr. Merasty.

Mr. Merasty works with all of the nine communities of the MLFNs on all four pillars of emergency management: mitigation, preparedness, response and recovery as well as wild fire suppression activities. Mr. Merasty credits Patrick Hassler, emergency response coordinator with the Northern Inter-Tribal Health Authority Inc, as being a mentor to him.

“Mitigation and preparedness is performed through hazard and risk assessments, contingency planning and all hazard planning,” noted Mr. Merasty. “Response is a coordination hub to ensure effective relations are formed with all responsible agencies at the local, provincial and federal levels so that the reaction to an emergency is based on accurate and factual information.”

When Mr. Merasty is not in active response mode, he provides instructions in first aid, cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR), automated external defibrillators (AED), respiratory protection and basic first aid.

Flying Dust First Nation inks flare gas agreement

After working on an agreement for four years, the Flying Dust First Nation (FDFN) with the assistance of the First Nations Power Authority, have signed an agreement recently with SaskPower to supply flare gas to create electricity, according to FDFN Chief Jeremy Norman. Chief Norman added the agreement could be worth as much as $300 million. He acknowledged the previous leadership and staff of FDFN who have played an integral role in the development of this project.

“FDFN will purchase waste flare gas and it will be used to create electricity through a burner, which is good for the environment,” said Chief Norman. “The waste gas will not be released into the environment. FDFN has numerous oil and gas operations on our Treaty Land Entitlement lands in the south which enabled the First Nation to become involved in this project.”

“A study has been completed to determine where we can find a 20-year supply, and then build a facility,” noted Chief Norman. “There are a number of factors to consider,” explained Chief Norman, “including which site is economically feasible to connect to SaskPower’s power grid.”

FDFN has partnered with Genalta, a firm out of Calgary, that is an expert in this field. “Genalta has a track record of success in this area, having built a number of these plants in the Peace River area of Alberta,” said Chief Norman. “This is not a project that is going to create many long-term jobs once the plant is in operation,” he said. “There will be more employment during construction and we want to explore the possibility of some of those jobs going to our members once construction of the plant starts.”

When asked about the benefits of this project for FDFN, Chief Norman explains by saying there are so many areas where we are lacking on the First Nation, mentioning that the Council will engage the community to seek their views. “Potential areas where the funds could be earmarked would include programs for youth, scholarships, youth readiness exchange programs and addictions and drug programs,” commented Chief Norman.

Chief Norman then noted FDFN has infrastructure needs as does the opportunity presented by developing the Railway Avenue in Meadow Lake. “We have many needs and spending the financial resource from selling the flare gas will allow us to prioritize the needs of FDFN,” said Chief Norman. “It will be a few years before the project becomes an economic generator for us.”

Gerry Merasty
Gordon Iron has a lengthy career at the Tribal Council

**Editor’s Note:** One of the highlights in the upcoming issues of the Meadow Lake First Nations News will be a feature story of the Meadow Lake First Nations and the Meadow Lake Tribal Council. In this issue, we introduce the Chief Executive Officer Gordon Iron.

The Chief Executive Officer of the Meadow Lake Tribal Council (MLTC), Gordon Iron has had a lengthy career, progressing from junior to senior positions over the last 26 years. Mr. Iron, a member of the Canoe Lake Cree First Nation, began his career at MLTC as the assistant director of the Forestry Training Program. He obtained the position after completing a Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology Course in Integrated Resource Management that was offered at Buffalo Narrows in 1991.

“I preferred to work both in an office and outdoors. I did not want to be stuck in an office,” noted Mr. Iron.

“The Forestry Training Program was a good program, it trained individuals to gain employment, and it was eventually expanded to various sectors such as health administration, information technology and process operator technician program. The concept behind the program was to offer the individual some employment while learning how to perform in the position. MLTC became a partner in delivering the program in the 1980s.”

In 2000, Mr. Iron became the Director of Economic Development and he stayed in this position until 2009. He enjoyed working in this area, as he believes First Nations economic development is a cornerstone of self-sufficiency. After working in the economic development area, he became the Director of Programs and Services. This position was presented to Mr. Iron by the tribal council and he liked the fact that this position was involved in directing many of the programs and services delivered by the tribal council. “The Programs and Services Director was involved in many areas, including child and family services, employment, health, information technology and justice and training, and I enjoyed having an involvement in all these areas.”

In 2015, Mr. Iron was offered the acting Chief Executive Officer position on a nine month probationary period. During this time, the acting Chief Executive Officer was responsible for developing a strategic plan, providing advice to the elected leadership of the Meadow Lake First Nations (MLFNs), the tribal council staff and developing a new management structure at the tribal council for the senior director.

During his 26 years at MLTC, Mr. Iron has witnessed many changes. He explains MLTC is governed by the nine MLFNs, and provides second level services to these nine First Nations. “One of the goals of the MLTC is to transfer capacity back to the First Nations it serves,” added Mr. Iron. “Now with all the requirements in administration, such as new ways of doing business, the complexity of agreements, especially funding agreements, places additional workloads and pressures on First Nations. The tribal council is working with the First Nations to meet their needs.”

According to Mr. Iron, First Nations are keen to take advantage of new business activity and opportunities, as they see such projects as the key to self-sufficiency. “First Nations want to train their members to take advantage of these projects as they present themselves,” he said.

Mr. Iron points to the progress being made by the MLFNs in reconnecting with their culture, traditions and languages. “This is key for these communities to progress and move forward on reconciliation,” he said.

When asked about progress in the communities, Mr. Iron spoke of improving the internet services in the communities so that residents have cell service and high-speed internet. “The communities have high-speed service at the schools and health centre, and the tribal council is working on obtaining the same high-speed service at all the administration offices. By this summer, the upgrading of the internet to high speed should be completed in all nine First Nation communities.”

Mr. Iron was born at Île-à-la-Crosse and he grew up in the community. In high school he played volleyball, and he mentions that in Grade 12 he played for the Île-à-la-Crosse Huskies who won the provincial volleyball championship in 1985. He later played on the Saskatchewan Volleyball Team for the Canada Games.

Mr. Iron and his wife Shelley, a nurse at Northland Pioneer Lodge, have two grown sons. In his spare time, Mr. Iron likes to watch his sons play hockey, and he and his wife like to go boating and camping in the summer. Hunting in the fall is another none of his passions. He enjoys watching hockey in the winter.

In the future, Mr. Iron would like to see all the communities become self-sufficient and to continue to move forward on good governance initiatives, along with seeing more youth employment and continue to move away from social assistance. He believes it will take time, but says the MLFNs are on the right path to independence.

**Education Second Level Services**

By Heather Merasty, Senior Director of Education

Eddlahto! Tansi! Hello! Greetings from the Meadow Lake Tribal Council Education Second Level Services. The Office of Education serves the nine First Nations Schools in each of the nine communities, and serves approximately 2,200 students. Meadow Lake Tribal Council (MLTC), Gordon Iron Chief Executive Officer of the Meadow Lake Tribal Council, Heather Merasty, two Superintendents of Education, Elizabeth Read and Tanis Crawford, an Assistant Superintendent, Patricia St. Denis, and professional development Coordinators and Coaches for various subjects and areas.

The Office of Education reports regularly to the Education Authority Board of Education for the MLFNs, which became a federally incorporated Board of Education in December 2017. The Board of Education consists of a Board Chair, Chief Francis Iron, Co-chair, Chief Richard Ben and one representative from each of the Meadow Lake First Nations.

**Education Vision**

The MLTC Vision for education is to foster sustainable, meaningful and supplementary educational services that promote lifelong learning through a holistic lens.

**MLTC Education Mission**

The MLTC Education Mission for education is to empower member First Nations by providing sustainable supports that honour a reciprocal and relational exploration of bridging traditional and non-traditional knowledge that connects person to place.

**MLTC Philosophy of Education**

The vision and mission are achieved by operating under a holistic philosophy that is based on the premise that each person finds identity, meaning and purpose in life through connections to the community, to the land, to their language and to relationships. A holistic approach that aims for lifelong learning in all domains of development (mental, physical, social/emotional and spiritual), that encompasses the values and beliefs of the MLFNs, to prepare students to live well as contributing community members in both traditional and non-traditional ways of life.
Child and Family Services

By Darlene Rediron, Senior Director of Child and Family Services, Meadow Lake Tribal Council

Meadow Lake Tribal Council Child and Family Services is a delegated Child Protection Agency which provides a variety of services to the nine Meadow Lake First Nations belonging to the Meadow Lake Tribal Council (MLTC). The Health and Social Development Directorates at MLTC entered into a Tripartite Agreement with Saskatchewan and Canada in 1984. This coming September will mark 24 years for MLTC’s Child and Family Services providing services to the Meadow Lake First Nations.

Child and Family Services are legislated by Saskatchewan to provide services as per The Child and Family Services Act. Staff working for MLTC Child and Family Services number 32, with 19 of these individuals holding bachelor of social work degrees. The following services are provided by MLTC Child and Family Services:

- Child Enhancement - provides supports to children in care and ensures their needs are met. There are currently three Child Enhancement Workers serving nine communities,
- Child Protection - protecting and keeping children safe,
- Family Connections - advocates for children in care off-reserve. Completes joint planning for children in care off-reserve with the Saskatchewan Ministry of Social Services staff,
- Foster Care/Resource Services - keeping children in care safe and connected to community and family. Offers training to potential care providers. Hosts a Foster Care Conference each year for caregiver support.

Recruits care givers who are interested in providing a caring and loving home for the children,
- Prevention Services - supporting families in the home,
- Therapy Services - in-home and community therapy for families and children in care, and
- Youth Development – supporting First Nation communities in creating and maintaining youth programs in the areas of mental, physical, emotional and spiritual.

Vision

The vision of MLTC Child and Family Services is that “Children are gifts which people have been given. As Elders, Chiefs and Councils, parents and community members, accept the responsibility for the care of these gifts.”

Fire Suppression Program

By Roberta Morin, Administrative Assistant, Meadow Lake Tribal Council

The annual training of the fire suppression crews of the Meadow Lake First Nations has recently been completed. Each year, new recruits to the Fire Suppression Program must attend mandatory training. This year the training took place at the Sandy Beach Resort situated on the north shore of Lac La Plonge Lake, 20 kilometres northeast of La Plonge.

Seventeen individuals from the Meadow Lake First Nations (MLFNs) took new hire training this year. There will be two more training courses offered this year. Eight individuals received crew leader training at the most recent training session.

The firefighting training focuses on the following areas: animal safety, equipment use and maintenance, fire weather/behaviour, firefighting methods, helicopter safety, map and compass reading, pump and power saw training, radio operations, Transportation of Dangerous Goods and Workplace Hazardous Material Information System.

The Meadow Lake First Nations (MLFNs) have participated in the Fire Suppression Program since 1992. The program was developed based on two main components; to support the Provincial Fire Preparedness Program and to assist the First Nation communities with their public works.

The original contract had six crews that were located at the northern First Nation communities. The original program required personnel to have the basic firefighter certificate and the crew boss also required the crew boss certificate.

Today the fire suppression program has expanded to 18 five person crews, with each of the MLFNs having at least one crew. The crews are considered professional firefighters and are required to meet certain qualifications.

Each crew member must pass a provincial standard fitness test, complete the basic firefighter course, receive medical clearance and pass a new hires training course. In addition to the qualified courses, the crew members also get certifications in chainsaw operation and safety tickets. The crew members are required to keep in good physical shape, therefore they participate in morning daily walks. The provincial fire centre utilizes the crews for fire suppression, and in emergencies for initial attack. The crew’s primary responsibilities are with the Fire Preparedness Program. The provincial fire protection personnel will determine the First Nation utilization based on the daily fire indexes.

When the crews are not required for their provincial fire duties, they then work on projects within their home reserves in times of low fire danger. The crews have been utilized for various duties, such as assisting with community events (graduations, pow wows and treaty days), assisting Elders, cutting grass and shrubs, garbage pickup, painting and many other duties as determined by the community leadership.

The program is jointly funded by the province of Saskatchewan, the federal government and the First Nations. The Meadow Lake Tribal Council negotiates the contract. The MLFNs are the employers for their respective crews.

For more information on the Fire Suppression Program, you may contact Roberta Morin at the MLTC office.

Birch Narrows Dene Nation Fire Suppression Crew: (left to right) Howard Morin, Gabrielle Truslaw, Tamara Hoeberry, Stewart Tobac and Bradley Sylvester

Waterhen Lake First Nation Fire Suppression Crew: (left to right) Korbin Fiddler, Brian Soluk, Gary Ernest, Rossiwah Iron and (front left to right) Aaron Martell and Timothy Martell

Flying Dust First Nation Fire Suppression Crew: (left to right) Gary Nezimich, Raymond Bear and Dylan Micosky

Waterhen Lake First Nation Fire Suppression Crew: (left to right) Clayton Martell, Dominique Fiddler, Ian Fiddler and Jason Blackbird
First Nations control of Health Services now in 27th year

By Flora Fiddler, Senior Director of Health and Social Development

The Meadow Lake Tribal Council (MLTC) signed its first Health Transfer Agreement with the federal government in August of 1991, and now the tribal council and the Meadow Lake First Nations have been controlling health services for 27 years. Last year, MLTC developed a ten-year health plan which is supported by a similar length Health Transfer Agreement which will expire in 2027.

The five new health priorities set as goals over the ten year plan are:

• better Elder care;
• better mental health;
• healthier youth;
• reducing addictions and addiction-related health problems; and
• reducing respiratory diseases.

MLTC and the Meadow Lake First Nations are working in concert to transform the above priorities into their annual work plans and resources, while working in collaboration with other MLTC and First Nations Programs including Child and Family Services, Education and Justice.

Highlights in 2017-18

Accreditation

In partnership with Accreditation Canada, MLTC embarked on a journey to begin the on-going process of assessing health services against standards of excellence to identify what is being done well and what needs improvement. Quality improvement involves the MLTC organization leadership, staff, programs and services.

Meadow Lake Health and Social Development Authority (MLHSDA) began the accreditation process for the following entities: MLTC Health Second Level Service Delivery, Flying Dust First Nation Community Health Services and Waterhen Lake First Nation Primary Care Health Services in 2017-2018. The entities received Primer Accreditation in 2017 under Accreditation Canada, and are currently working on required Organization Practices Accreditation by February 2019.

MLHSDA is also involved in Accreditation with the Mistakey Musqua Treatment Centre (MMMC) located at the Makwa Sahgaiehcan First Nation under the Canadian Accreditation Council.

Benefits of Accreditation

There are many advantages to being accredited. The advantages include:

• developing policies and procedures that support quality improvement;
• engaging staff in the ongoing safety of the people they serve;
• increase efficiencies and streamlining care;
• showing the First Nations the commitment to quality and safety in health care delivery;
• staying up to date with best practices; and
• working with clients and families to offer care that is respectful, compassionate and competent.

Capital Projects

MLTC is working on upgrading the Mistakey Musqua Treatment Centre, and by mid-May of this year, extensive renovation upgrades should be completed. Staff are currently deployed delivering Alcohol and Other Drug Services. A sod turning ceremony for the Waskoosi Safe Shelter was held in late April. The new shelter will have an increased bed capacity and will be wheelchair-accessible, have office and programming space along with additional security precautions for those who will be using the facility.

Mental Health Services

MLTC is working on increasing capacity at the MLFNs to support the efforts in strengthening Mental Health services. MLTC has been delivering Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM) training at the First Nation level in the event of a crisis in the communities. With the training, the communities are able to respond with trained teams and with a response plan to support individuals, family and community.

The First Nation Addictions workers, the First Nation Wellness workers and the Mistakey Musqua Treatment Centre staff are also supported to achieve Certification with Registered Nurses in Home Care,_prenatal, and families with mental health issues and traumatic events.

Nursing Program

MLTC Nursing provides clinical supervision and program support to the Nursing Programs at the MLFNs. MLTC also maintains a pool of more than 30 qualified Registered Nurses with Additional Authorizes Practice (RNAAP) and Registered Nurse Practitioners (RNPN) to provide relief nursing services in the primary care sites.

MLTC is committed to quality care and supports training throughout the year to ensure Nursing competence. MLTC hosted a Nursing meeting on April 18 to 20, 2018. Topics included: naloxone kit training, pre and post HIV test counselling, harm reduction and knowing your status program, cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) certification, round table, wound care refresher, life pac 15 and electrocardiography (ECG) interpretation training.

Safer Communities has been identified as one of the priorities within the Health Plan and having naloxone available in the event of an opioid overdose is lifesaving. MLTC has provided the supports to nurses related to naloxone and it is now available to all family, friends or individuals. Nurses are now able to provide both the training and the kits in their communities.

Makwa Sahgaiehcan First Nation 20th anniversary Pow Wow successful

Pow Wow season has begun for the nine Meadow Lake First Nations. On the May long weekend, Makwa Sahgaiehcan First Nation staged its annual Pow Wow and Canoe Lake Cree Nation is holding one on May 25, 26 and 27.

Meadow Lake Tribal Council Vice-chair Larry Iron attended the event and noted it was well attended. Vice-chair Iron said the Assembly of First Nations (AFN) National Chief Perry Bellegarde, Federation of Sovereign Indigenous Nations Bobby Cameron, Second Vice-chair David Pratt and Third Vice-chair Edward (Dutch) Lerat all attended. “This year marks the first time that the AFN National Chief has attended the Pow Wow at Makwa,” said Vice-chair Iron.

“There were introductions of new dancers and lots of dancing.”

Canoe Lake Cree Nation’s Pow Wow will take place May 25, 26 and 27, noted Vice-chair Iron. “The entire community has worked at getting the new year’s Pow Wow ready for the Pow Wow,” said the Vice-chair, who is from Canoe Lake Cree Nation. “Everyone is welcome, there will be special dances on the three days and there will be presentations on Saturday. Chiefs from the Federation of Sovereign Indigenous Nations along with other First Nation Chiefs are expected to attend.

Makwa Sahgaiehcan First Nation’s 20th Anniversary Pow Wow was attended by (left to right) Federation of Sovereign Indigenous Nations (FSIN) Third Vice-chair Dutch Lerat, Meadow Lake Tribal Council Vice-chair Larry Iron, FSIN Second Vice-chair David Pratt, Saulteaux First Nation Chief Kenny Moccasin, MSFN member Chloe Ben, Assembly of First Nations National Chief Perry Bellegarde, MSFN Chief Richard Ben and FSIN Chief Bobby Cameron.
**Waterhen Crew Leader Clayton Martell likes his job**

Clayton Martell is a crew leader for the Waterhen Lake First Nation Fire Suppression Crew. He and his crew, along with other individuals, are battling the Tuff Wildfire near the community. Mr. Martell and his fellow crew members reported the fire.

His crew consists of: Crew Members Dominiq Fidler, Ian Fidler, Jamie Fiddler and Jason Blackbird. Mr. Martell has worked as a member of the fire suppression crew for the last six years.

He attended his first fire at the age of 15 years, and although he has had other jobs between then and now, fighting wildfires is his favourite. When asked what he enjoys about his job, Mr. Martell said, “I think it’s every kid’s dream. I guess it’s a different kind of adrenaline rush.” When asked what he dislikes about the job, Martell stated, “Some of the people we help can be rude, not the trees, the trees don’t ever complain.”

Mr. Martell noted that he and his crew do jobs such as setting up the water pumps, setting up tripods for the sprinkler heads and setting up the sprinkler system at the M & N Resort. In the mornings, Martell and his crew have a complete morning exercises. In the afternoons and evenings, his crew work on the grass and shrubs, garbage pickup, painting and many other duties as determined by the community leadership.

**Results of the Review of Programs and Services**

By Christine Derocher, Senior Director of Programs

The vision of the Meadow Lake Tribal Council is to “Become a strong, united voice for supplementary support and effective services to all our member First Nations as they create health, prosperity and good governance.”

The Meadow Lake Tribal Council (MLTC) completed a review of the tribal council and its programs and services in 2015. Of the recommendations that came out of the report was to create an incorporated board for the four programs (Economic Development, Justice, Technical Services and Social Assistance) that did not have a board.

MLTC Program and Services Inc. is a Chiefs appointed board mandated to provide program services to the nine member First Nations in the MLTC on Economic Development, Technical Services, Justice and Social Assistance. The board plays an important role in overseeing the program delivery to its member First Nations and provides a vital link between MLTC and the First Nation communities it serves. MLTC works together with the Meadow Lake First Nations (MLFNs) to strengthen the communities and improve the well-being of First Nations people by providing top quality second level services.

**Justice**

Four departments at MLTC, Justice, Health, Child and Family Services and Education collaborated and contributed resources to deliver a program geared at developing and empowering the youth at the nine First Nations. Burn Youth was contracted by MLTC to offer nine one-week long sessions in each of the nine MLFNs. These sessions target youth between the ages of 12-16 years of age who were experiencing personal difficulties in their lives. A follow up week in May through June is planned to revisit the youth’s goals and bring the parent and youth together to establish and improve communication and relationships.

The goal in Economic Development is to increase capacity and train nine Economic Development Officers to generate wealth and employment opportunities for their respective First Nations and provide business advisory support services to the community members.

Jesse Morin, Business Development Officer (306-236-5654).

**Meadow Lake First Nations Treaty Days 2018**

May 17 Thursday, Maikwa Sahaqehcian First Nation, Arena, 10 am - 3 pm
June 11 Tuesday, Birch Narrows Dene Nation, Clinic, 11 am - 1 pm
June 12 Tuesday, Canoe Lake Cree Nation, Tee Pee Band Office, 11 - 3 pm
June 13 Wednesday, Buffalo River Dene Nation, Treaty Grounds, 11 am - 2 pm
June 14 Thursday, English River First Nation, Treaty Grounds 11 am - 2 pm
June 15 Friday, Clearwater River Dene Nation, Campgrounds 10 am - 2 pm
June 26 Tuesday, Ministikiwan Lake Cree Nation, Tent School Site, 11 am - 3 pm
June 27, Wednesday, Waterhen Lake First Nation, School Gym, 10 am - 2 pm
June 29 Friday, Flying Dust First Nation, Community Centre, 9 am - 1 pm