

Circles of Light

February-March 2002 – Number 18

Membertou First Nation Plans Pay Off with International Standards Accreditation

by Raymond Lawrence

Like so many Aboriginal communities, Membertou First Nation went looking for the proverbial level playing field. The Nova Scotia First Nation found that – and a whole lot more.

The community approached its economic development scene from some productive angles, while taking measures to address accountability and governance issues. In this way, Membertou made itself a more attractive potential business partner for joint ventures and investments.

In terms of accountability to its own members, the First Nation Council posts a breakdown of its budget on Membertou's website, and distributes quarterly reports to everyone in the community.

Governance

Across the country, First Nations are developing good governance practices and building strong communities, people and economies. This issue of *Circles of Light* profiles some of the many First Nations who are reaping the benefits of improved accountability and governance in their own communities.

The Government of Canada is working to support these efforts through the *Communities First: First Nations Governance* initiative. For up-to-the-minute information, log on to the website at www.fng-gpn.gc.ca

To build a better business base, the First Nation found an approach that is bringing dividends home. Recently, Membertou announced its success in obtaining International Standards Organization ISO 9001:2000 accreditation, something that sets a new and exciting precedent in the Aboriginal community. The year-long process of becoming accredited means the Membertou First Nation is now recognized as an organization that adheres to stringent international guidelines. This accreditation is a stamp of approval that is recognized worldwide.

“On November 30, an independent audit company called QM1 — a leader in ISO quality assurance — did the audit on our operations and recommended us to the International Standards Organization,” explains **Bernd Christmas**, Membertou Director of Operations. “The whole thing is a very intensive process that ensures certain service standards, and includes everything from procedures to checks and balances. There are policies on conflict of interest and financial management. There’s a lot to do with accountability, transparency and openness.” The First Nation’s



Photo courtesy of Mi'kmaq-Maliseet Nations News

Chief **Terry Paul** accepted the ISO 9001:2000 designation on behalf of the Membertou First Nation at a January 2002 ceremony.

entire staff must be familiar with the processes as ISO relates to their work, and follow the procedures to the letter.

“The band and corporate office represent the first Indigenous government in Canada to comply with ISO,” Christmas emphasizes. “In fact, according to research, we’re the first Indigenous government in the world to do this. We see it as another step in good governance as it determines how band council deals with its shareholders — its members — so they

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Indian and Northern
Affairs Canada

Affaires indiennes
et du Nord Canada

Canada

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can have faith and understand that their affairs are being taken care of in the best way possible."

"This opens up the way for us to do more business with government and with the corporate sector," he adds. "This will bring more of the corporate sector to Membertou to do business with us in a lucrative market — the Aboriginal community."

But Membertou did more than get ISO accreditation. The First Nation has also opened an office in Halifax. This brings the community closer to the government agencies with which it does business, and with Atlantic Canada's private sector companies, most of which have Halifax offices. Membertou struck a deal with Clearwater Fine Foods which now markets a Membertou line of snow crab and employs about 20 members of the First Nation.

Christmas says the First Nation sees its business-related moves as opening up global doors that will help make the community more prosperous, and ensure its members have meaningful jobs and a better standard of living. Infrastructure is already expanding in the community, he confirms, and new enterprises are emerging in various business sectors.

For more information, visit the website at www.membertou.ca *

Raymond Lawrence is a freelance writer of Ojibway and European ancestry.

Aboriginal Financial Officers Association A Thriving Network Sets Standards of Excellence

A boriginal financial officers throughout the country are now vitally "connected." Through provincial and territorial chapters of the Aboriginal Financial Officers Association (AFOA), they're developing a thriving network.

Federally incorporated as a not-for-profit association in 1999, the professional association is the result of teamwork between the Assembly of First Nations and the Certified General Accountants (CGA Canada) Working Group. Through its network of chapters, AFOA promotes outstanding practices that have a far-reaching impact on accountability and sound financial management in First Nations and Aboriginal organizations throughout the country.

In the Northwest Territories, for example, Aboriginal groups can now get advice and information from AFOA about managing land and resources under their settled claims. The N.W.T. chapter has over 50 members, including accountants, bookkeepers, comptrollers, financial managers, officers, clerks, administrators, band managers, program managers, and trainees of N.W.T. Aboriginal organizations.

"This association provides much-needed support to our members," says



Photo credit: Sharon Clarke/INAC

Denise Alger, left, and Barb Moreau Betsaka look over figures at an Aboriginal Financial Officers workshop in Yellowknife, N.W.T.



Patti Jocko, the president of AFOA's N.W.T. chapter. "We're really excited about some of the initiatives we've been able to launch." These include work with the N.W.T. Department of Municipal and Community Affairs and the School of Community Government to develop occupational standards and a diploma program for the positions of Band Manager and Financial Officer.

"AFOA was created because of the need for First Nations to be fiscally responsible and independent," confirms **Daniel R. Ryan**, AFOA President. "Our mandate is to provide the tools to make that happen."

These tools include the quality standards, practices, research, and certification and professional development programs that AFOA develops

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Osoyoos Indian Band Building an Aboriginal Economy

by Diane Koven

The Osoyoos Indian Band, located in the lush Okanagan Valley of British Columbia, is using its Development Corporation to encourage a healthy First Nation economy.

Osoyoos Chief **Clarence Louie** is a firm believer in economic self-sufficiency. Under his guidance, the community has concentrated its efforts and resources on socio-economic development. The profits from the First Nation's various enterprises are reinvested in programs and services to improve members' quality of life, and preserve their heritage. The community currently operates eight businesses, and two more are being added this year.

"We are not yet fully successful in business; we still have much to learn, but we have earned ourselves the chance of attaining the self-supporting lifestyle of our ancestors," says Louie. "To venture into the real business world is a good learning experience that provides dramatic opportunities. For without an economic base from which to build, First Nations will never be in control of their future."

The community's location offers tremendous economic advantages. Situated on 5,260 hectares of land between Oliver and Osoyoos, B.C., the First Nation owns the largest tract of unspoiled desert in Canada. The region's moderate climate has enabled the community to develop a golf course, vineyard, RV park and several spin-off businesses. The Osoyoos Indian Band also operates profitable businesses in construction, retail, logging and land leasing, and has recently acquired a Ready-Mix concrete business. The community's taxation authority brings in much-needed revenue for infrastructure. And construction will begin shortly on a 125-unit housing development, Inkameep Manufactured Home Park, to be built next to the golf course.

Another major construction project began in late 2001 on Nk'Mip Cellars, a 15,000-case winery. "Technical expertise got the project beyond talk to an actual detailed business plan, design and financing, and finally construction, and the winery should be in operation by spring," confirms Chief Louie. "The addition of the winery to our corporate operations will improve employment and career opportunities and will add revenue to the band."

And, after careful planning over the past 10 years, another new project is coming to life. "Our Desert Interpretive Heritage Cultural Centre temporary buildings have recently been set up," says Louie. He believes this is the First Nation's most important project, "one that truly models First Nation socio-economic development — advances, protects, and educates Native and non-Native people on Okanagan culture and heritage, while creating jobs and revenue. This operation has been established with the aid of Aboriginal Business Canada and INAC's Resource Partnerships Program."

Chief Louie credits the First Nation's members for their expertise, hard work and determination in all aspects of their economy. "The economy always starts with your land and your people," he observes. "Some First Nations do not have the land and location that we have. But also, you have to have the people who are willing to stand on their own two feet and make the effort — people willing to take the risks, people who want to learn and earn."

Good governance and good management of money are key factors in creating and sustaining an economy, Louie maintains, adding that empowered and effective governance creates opportunities and provides resources for Aboriginal socio-economic development. "The Government of Canada



"Without an economic base from which to build, First Nations will never be in control of their future," observes Osoyoos Chief **Clarence Louie**.

plays an important role in the emergence of First Nations economies," Chief Louie concludes. "I commend Minister Nault and the economic development staff within INAC and Aboriginal Business Canada for their efforts and growing focus on Native business development."

For more information, visit the Osoyoos Indian Band website at www.oib.ca *

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Montagnais of Essipit Working as One to Get the Job Done

by Raymond Lawrence

Twenty years ago, when the Montagnais of Essipit, Quebec, decided to work together to develop community-owned businesses, they didn't even have their own office. They also faced the challenge of approximately 20 percent unemployment in their region along the North Shore of the St. Lawrence. But dedicated marketing of their area's tourist attractions — including superb opportunities for whale watching — is just one of the ways this First Nation has transformed its economy.

They knew they had to start off small, and remain true to their development philosophy. That meant redirecting profits from smaller businesses back into the community so that they could be invested in larger projects.

The 200-member community rose to the challenges. Today, its operations employ 178 people, with 53 year-round jobs. "There aren't many social problems here... the people here work hard. We have something like a co-op with all our businesses," explains **Marc Genest**, Director of Economic Development. "What we have was built from small projects, but now the projects are bigger and bigger. We have a 32-room, \$3.5-million accommodation complex that we're building. But at the start we were working on \$50,000 projects."

The community has businesses in forestry, doing pre-commercial thinning of some 700 hectares of forest. They also have a construction business and various local service enterprises. But their biggest successes have been in the tourism sector. They have six hunting and fishing lodges that cover a 250-square-kilometre area, cottages, condominiums, a campground and whale-watching cruises. "At Grandes-Bergeronnes, Croisières Essipit cruises



The Montagnais of Essipit offer whale watching tours as part of their plan to benefit from their area's natural tourist attractions.

offer two outstanding whale-watching options," Genest adds, "either on board the catamaran, *Kashkan*, which can accommodate 96 passengers, or on an inflatable dinghy. Whichever way visitors choose, they will learn a lot about the many varied species of whales here."

Although most of their clients come from cities in Quebec, the First Nation has been advertising and promoting itself aggressively in Europe through trade shows, while dealing with tourism agents on large bookings. The Montagnais also reach their prospective clients through newspaper and magazine ads and the Internet. "There's a lot of money that goes into promotion," says Genest.

But the Montagnais have more in mind than just business. For the past 20 years, they've worked to develop a strong, healthy community that would recapture the quality of

life they once knew. Their aim is for community infrastructure with a swimming pool, tennis courts, a baseball field and a bowling alley, offering plenty of recreational activities for the community's youth.

There is an added plus — now the young people can come home from school during the summer and find jobs in one of several community-owned enterprises.

Genest says that the community's political stability has been one of the keys to their success. "Our Chief has been there for 24 years, so he's been there since the beginning," comments Genest. "The secret to long-term community development is to have a long-term community vision and to follow that."

For more information, visit the website at www.essipit.com *

Tli Cho Logistics Inc. Of and For the Community

by Edwinna von Baeyer

George Mackenzie, President of Tli Cho Logistics Inc. and a Dogrib Rae First Nation member, has never forgotten a conversation he once had with another First Nation member. The young man told him that he had nothing to wake up to in the morning as there weren't enough jobs in the community.

"We've now given many of our youth something to wake up for," Mackenzie says proudly. "There are many jobs for the community today, as well as the promise of training and preparation for higher education."

How did this First Nation in the Northwest Territories turn around a situation of chronic high unemployment to create a stronger economy and a more vibrant community? The key was the opportunity for potential jobs that the First Nation seized when BHP Diamonds Inc. opened the Ekati diamond mine.

The Council asked for advice from other First Nations with business experience and searched for a business partner so they could compete for site service contracts. They formed

a partnership with Calgary-based ATCO Frontec and, together, they founded Tli Cho Logistics Inc. in 1998. The Dogrib Rae First Nation owns 51 percent of the joint venture company, while ATCO Frontec owns 49 percent. Within a year, the company had won its first contract to supply fuel-handling services for the Ekati mine. Soon, it had another contract to supply Diavik Diamond Mines Inc. which is located about 300 km northeast of Yellowknife.

Tli Cho Logistics then won a bigger, ground-breaking contract in 1999. This full site services contract — the first of its kind in North America — is "evergreen," which means that the company will hold it for the entire life of the mine.

At the Diavik mine site, the company provides road maintenance, water, sewage and garbage services, fuel supplies, plumbing, carpentry and electrical shops, janitorial services, snow removal, and air freight handling. The contract has grown to include subcontracts for human resources management, and the creation of an apprenticeship training package

to prepare the community's young people for various trades.

"This is important," Mackenzie notes, "because our young people were turned down for these positions in the past. This training package is designed for Dogrib youth by Dogrib companies."

In just three years, the partnership has become a multimillion-dollar enterprise employing nearly 100 people. ATCO Frontec contributes its expertise, while the First Nation, Mackenzie emphasizes, "contributes its knowledge of the land through our Elders, the knowledge of the direction that our people want to go, and the knowledge of our young people and the training they need. We help each other."

As Tli Cho Logistics has grown, it has reinvested in the community. The company, for example, has built an airport just outside the town of Edzo. The business is also involved in helping First Nation members get the education and training they need to advance in their jobs, and help build and maintain a strong, independent Dogrib Nation.

"We have told our young people that you are not working for us, but for your own community, families and children to come," Mackenzie adds. "We are all proud to operate and work for this company."

For more information, telephone Tli Cho Logistics Inc. at (867) 920-7288. ★



Photo courtesy of Diavik

Tli Cho Logistics Inc. and Diavik Diamond Mines Inc. signed a ground-breaking contract in the fall of 2000. Standing are ATCO Frontec manager **Dale Getty**, left, and Dogrib Rae Chief **Eddie Paul Rabesca**. Seated, from left, are Dogrib Nation Grand Chief **Joe Rabesca**, Tli Cho Logistics chairman **George Mackenzie**, Diavik Diamond Mines Inc. vice president of operations **Phil du Toit** and Diavik Diamond Mines Inc. president **Stephen Prest**.

Miawpukek First Nation Building On A Sense of Pride

by Tara Lee Wittchen

Picture a remote community surrounded by high hills in a sheltered bay. No shopping malls, no big box stores — and a two-hour drive to the nearest coffee shop.

“We’re kind of nestled into this quiet corner,” says **Phoebe Keeping**, one of two economic development officers in Conne River, Newfoundland, home of the Miawpukek First Nation. “Tourists like it because it’s a getaway from the everyday sort of thing — the hustle and bustle of the big city.”

Employment and economic development are priorities in this First Nation community. Its five percent unemployment rate is a source of pride — and an impressive achievement considering the provincial rate hovers around 20 percent.

“We’re working with companies off-reserve and making them familiar with working with First Nations people,” Keeping says. The Miawpukek Human Resources department also helps high school and post-secondary graduates find employment outside the community.

Part of Conne River’s success is due to the fact that every registered band member has a say in the community’s direction.

“If you were to look at our organizational chart, Chief and Council are not first. Our community is first,” Keeping stresses. First Nation members living in the community can question any department about its programs and services, and can review all audit statements.

“They can sit in on our Chief and Council meetings, which we host once a month,” adds Keeping. “During audit season, we have an annual assembly where all the departments give reports on what they’ve done, and talk about their plans for the next year. It’s completely open to the public.”



“If you look at our organizational chart, Chief and Council are not first. Our community is first,” stresses Miawpukek First Nation economic development officer **Phoebe Keeping**.

That openness was very much in evidence when Council presented a community tourism strategy at the annual assembly a few years ago. One of the strategy’s goals was to build a multimillion-dollar tourist resort in Conne River.

“[The community] didn’t agree to it,” Keeping says. “They weren’t opposed to increasing tourism, but didn’t know if they wanted to go that big, that fast. They’re afraid that our culture and our traditions are going to become too commercialized.”

“We said, ‘Okay, we have this huge document with all these ideas about how to increase tourism within the community. Why don’t we just take it slowly?’” A 10-member community tourism management team was created to review the document and work with one project at a time. So far, the team has helped existing businesses increase their tourism potential.

“When the community thinks we’re ready for it, then that’s when we’ll do it,” Keeping affirms.

For more information, visit their website at www.miawpukek.nf.ca *

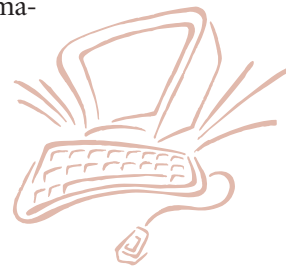
Tara Lee Wittchen is a writer and editor of Ojibway and European ancestry.

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and promotes. Members can expand their knowledge and expertise by taking AFOA’s Aboriginal Financial Management Program courses. The provincial and territorial chapters deliver these courses, which are taught by experts.

AFOA will continue to hold annual conferences that focus on the latest trends and issues in financial management.

For more information about AFOA’s programs and resources, visit the website at www.afoa.ca *



Siksika Nation

Consultation Is Key to Strong Governance

by Tara Lee Wittchen

For Siksika Nation in Alberta, the road to good governance is through community consultation.

The First Nation is applying the advice of the outside auditing firm it contracted to review the community's administrative controls and procedures, and offer suggestions on improving accountability. One of the firm's recommendations was community consultation, explains **Jack Royal**, executive services branch manager for Siksika Nation. "It's just prudent management," he adds.

In keeping with the consultation principle, monthly general meetings of Chief and Council are open to all, including off-reserve members and non-members. Quarterly community meetings are also public events, and all community members receive Chief and Council meeting minutes by mail every month.

"In the general meetings, they (Chief and Council) usually devote however much time is necessary — usually a day or two — to members, to allow them to voice any concerns they might have," says Royal.

Other accountability initiatives passed by Council include a financial management code. "That regulates all of the controls and procedures with money matters," Royal explains. The code is a public document, available to all members.

Consultation is also central to the community's involvement with the *Framework Agreement on First Nations Land Management*. Fourteen First Nations across Canada (Siksika is the only one in Alberta) signed the Agreement in 1996, allowing them to opt out of the land management sections of the *Indian Act*.

Under the Agreement, the Government of Canada and the 14 First Nations agreed to look at developing



Members of Siksika Nation take part in major decisions that affect their community.

their individual land codes and legislation. The codes would be ratified by each First Nation through a referendum, and the government would then pass the supporting federal legislation. The objective is to make it easier for First Nations to use their lands to support community economic development.

As Royal points out, accountability is strengthened by the Framework Agreement process. Each First Nation develops its land code through a consultation process with its members. This consultation would involve "things like how Siksika members see the management of their lands," he clarifies. The community, adds Royal, also gives advice on how Chief and Council, senior managers, administration staff, Nation members, and non-members who are using land, should be accountable.

"It's all community-driven because it's all through consultation," Royal

emphasizes. "The community provides input and feedback. Once we come up with a document and it's formalized, then we bring it back to the community to ratify it by way of referendum."

The *First Nations Land Management Act* that results from this process will promote community self-management, and at the same time offer potential economic benefits. Other initiatives, like the First Nation's joint venture training program with the Southern Alberta Institute of Technology, are also enhancing economic development and employment opportunities in Siksika.

"Obviously we'd like to see it a lot quicker," says Royal of the community's expanding skills capacity, "but it's moving and that's the main thing."

For more information, telephone Siksika Nation at (403) 734-5100. ✱

Millbrook First Nation

Planning, Economic Development Key to First Nation's Success

by Richard Landis

Millbrook First Nation Chief **Lawrence Paul** always knew life held out the promise of something better.

Growing up among a ramshackle collection of houses on the outskirts of Truro, Nova Scotia, Paul, his family and other members of the Millbrook First Nation lived without running water, indoor toilets and many other amenities their non-Aboriginal neighbours up the road took for granted.

Paul swore then and there that he'd make a better life for his family and community. It's a pledge he continues to honour to this day.

"Millbrook has come a long way. I'm proud to say that it's run along traditional Mi'kmaq customs that are based on sharing, on respect for our Elders and love of our children," says Paul.

First elected Chief of his community in 1984, Paul has now served nine consecutive terms as the First Nation's leader. He takes great pride in the progress his Mi'kmaq community has made over the years. Along with the other 11 members of Council, he has made community development the first priority.

Developing one's community, however, takes more than imagination and hard work. It also takes money.

The monies Millbrook needed for that development have come from treaty, funding and other negotiations with the federal and provincial governments. Today, Millbrook's fortunes have soared.

The First Nation has established Treaty Gas, an independent gas bar venture, and is the first Mi'kmaq community to own and operate a prime highway commercial development. The community also leases land,



Millbrook First Nation Chief **Lawrence Paul** surveys a few of the thriving businesses in his community.

located along the well-travelled roadway that runs through the reserve, to a number of businesses — and is negotiating with others, Paul adds.

Millbrook recently established a commercial fishery that operates a fleet of 12 vessels and employs a workforce of 40. A new \$1.5-million wharf has been built in Sheet Harbour.

Revenues from these and other ventures are poured back into the community. Last year, the First Nation used some of the monies for more resource people in the local school system. The aim is to help Mi'kmaq children and youth in reading, comprehension and other areas.

Part of the community's profits are used for housing and to upgrade roads and infrastructure. Other funds are distributed directly to the First Nation's 1,200 on- and off-reserve members. Last year, each member received \$2,000. Trust funds have been established for

those under age 19. Millbrook's combined economic and social development programs are creating a sense of community well-being. First Nation members are making decent wages, taking pride in their jobs and property, and are planning for the future.

"Millbrook has come a long way since it became a First Nation in 1896," says Paul proudly. "Today, we're a leader among First Nations in economic development. We're generating revenues. We're creating employment. We're sowing the seeds of self-sufficiency. We're benefiting the Truro and Colchester County economies. And we're proud to be paving the way for other First Nations by setting an example."

For more information, contact the Millbrook First Nation Council at (902) 897-9199. ✪



Portrait

“To Serve — With Respect”

Austin Bear Cree Chief, Muskoday First Nation

by Fred Favel

“Each day provides a new challenge. With the closing of one door, another opens and there is always an opportunity for a challenge. And for every challenge, there is a solution if one perseveres. Don’t lose sight of your personal goals and certainly don’t lose sight of the goals of your First Nation... although at times it is demanding of your time, of your family, your personal life, you make that commitment.”

As a teenager, Austin Bear chose to leave a repressive, rule-bound school and found a job so he could support himself. This was a defining moment for him — one that he carries with him as Chief of the Muskoday First Nation. Austin believes strongly in fairness and accountability in governing, whether it be directed at school-age children or at a whole community.

An underlying faith in the value of hard work is a thread woven throughout Austin’s life. He was born into a Saskatchewan farming family. He recalls the thrill when threshing crews would come through their community and to their farm, operating a steam engine to run the thresher. “It was a high time. It was a time to celebrate in the community. Children would be excused from school and it would be just like a big community gathering. The women would be cooking, the men would be working in the field with the threshing crew, and the children would be playing about.”

Muskoday First Nation is located about 20 kilometres southeast of Prince Albert, Saskatchewan. Today, the First Nation has a membership of 1,350, and about 500 live in the community itself. With a land base of 25,000 acres, its primary livelihood is agriculture, but many people commute the short distance to jobs in the city. In the 1940s and 1950s, when Austin was growing up, farming meant self-sufficiency. His father raised cattle and horses, and kept a large garden. “We certainly weren’t rich in money or wealth, but we never went hungry. My parents were very good providers.”

Austin’s schooling consisted of a government day school in the community and the Prince Albert Collegiate Institute, before moving on and boarding at a residential school. He objected to the control of the residential school’s administration and was asked to leave. But his mother’s strong work ethic set Austin’s course — she would not allow him to leave school just to sit at home and do nothing. “She basically asked me to leave her home and find employment.”

Austin went to work on a farm in southern Saskatchewan, an experience which wasn’t too harsh, but propelled him back to school at the end of the first summer. With his savings, he was able to buy a car at the age of 18, an achievement he still speaks of with pride. He went on to graduate from Prince Albert Composite High School, and continued in an auto mechanics course while working in construction to support himself.

Austin’s career took him from Toronto to Powell River, British Columbia where he worked as a mechanic, farm labourer, and construction transport driver, among other occupations. During this time, he returned to Muskoday once. He found the community had changed. “People were getting out more and there were more people employed... the community was developing and although the infrastructure was small, it was interesting to see that change.” He eventually returned home to stay in 1987 — and took on the challenge of a whole new career.

After battling addiction himself, Austin began working as a National Native Alcohol and Drug Abuse Program (NNADAP) community worker in Muskoday and completed his certification as an addictions counsellor. Four years later, community members approached him to run for chief. In 1991, Austin was elected Chief of the Muskoday First Nation, a position he holds to this day. He moved quickly to bring accountability to his position, with the first step being a policy that required him to have consent from council before he could approve any expenses over \$800. “That was the first thing I put into practice so there would be no claim that the chief has all this power to spend.”

Chief and Council report regularly to the community. “At the end of the fiscal year after the audits are complete, there is a community meeting... and we present the financial statements. Each councillor has a portfolio, and they give portfolio reports and updates on their activities. We give a year-end annual statement and lands report.” Members of the community can ask for financial information at any time.

Muskoday recently signed the Transfer Agreement bringing them under the *First Nations Land Management Act*, which gives the First Nation control over its land, resources and environment. Austin notes this accomplishment represents opportunities not only for his own community, but for other First Nations across the country as well.

Austin has continued his involvement with rehabilitation programs throughout his years as Chief, and serves as the president of the National Native Addictions Partnership Foundation. He also sits on the Lands Advisory Board which helps First Nations apply their own land management procedures. In this role, he regularly deals with issues relating to good governance and accountability. These are words which are often spoken but are not always easy to relate to one’s own personal experience. Austin, however, does this easily and eloquently — when asked to reflect on his role as chief of his community, he says it is “the capacity for compassion for your people... to serve all people equally and with respect.”

Fred Favel is an Aboriginal writer and communications consultant.



Photo: Laurel Lemchuk Favel



Photo courtesy Austin Bear

